



PORTRAIT OF HULDERICO SCHMIDEL, SHOWING HIS COAT OF ARMS.

THE CONQUEST OF THE RIVER PLATE

BY

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DEDICATORIA

Al Excelentísimo Señor Don Marcelo T. de Alvear, Presidente de la República Argentina nieto de prócer y cuyo nombre está ligado también al del ciudadano que señaló su paso por la Intendencia haciendo de Buenos Aires una ciudad moderna propicio asilo de la libertad y hogar predilecto de las ciencias y las artes

DEDICA

respetuosamente y con sinceros votos por su felicidad y cumplido acierto este bosquejo de la Conquista del Rio de la Plata.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM



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PREFACE

WHEN a foreigner writes the history of a country, not his own, there are many points of view from which he may attack his work.

It is not absolutely requisite that he should dive too deeply into records, or search archives to determine if John or George or Peter were born in or out of wedlock. It is not of the first importance for a foreigner writing for foreigners, of a country foreign alike to readers and to writer, to devour documents to find out if such and such a circumstance or an event took place upon the second or the third of May.

I see a critic pricking up the ears with which nature has endowed him, grasping his pen and writing in a fury, for it has been well said that the majority of writers only write to annoy critics, that the writer has proclaimed a gospel of inaccuracy and sloth.

With all due apologies in advance for having ventured to annoy some one or other who earns his daily bread by criticizing books on subjects with which he is imperfectly acquainted, I submit that I am right.

Nice accuracy as to the day and hour when such and such a thing fell out is, of course, vital to an historian writing for his own countrymen.

An Argentine would be within his right to gnash his teeth and tear his hair if Don Fulano de Zutano (or Mengano) should be out, in half an hour, when writing of the landing of Don Pedro de Mendoza in the River Plate. In fact, he should have calculated to a minute the difference of time between San Lucar de Barrameda and Buenos Aires, and taken into con-

sideration all the leeway that the fleet most probably had made upon the voyage.

Yet it is possible that the same Argentine reading of Marlborough would be more concerned to know what sort of man he was, the clothes he wore, and the horse that he rode, than the exact hour of the day on which the battle of Malplaquet was begun, or even how many of the enemy were slain.

My object has been to present some of the conquerors of the River Plate as human beings, and try to show that, taking into consideration the times in which they lived, they did not differ greatly from ourselves. We lay the flattering unction to our souls, that our adventurers in the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth were on a different moral plane from that on which the adventurers of Spain and Portugal strutted their little hour.

The same belief, but altered for national consumption, is held in Portugal and Spain, and in their histories (tell it not in Gath) the Englishman quite often is the villain of the piece, and he deserves to be, for their historians pick out the Northerner's ill deeds and pass his better actions over, just as we do in writing of Pizarro or Cortés.

If anyone has any doubts upon the subject, and thinks that certain races of mankind are crueller than others, let him look through the pages of old Purchas, or read of Morgan's doings at the sack of Panama. Or—but it is wise to tread a little carefully when skating on such very brittle ice—enquire what happened, once upon a time, in the Matoppo Hills.

Still, it is a dogma of our historic faith that we were never as those Spanish publicans. Such dogmas linger even amongst educated people, and are part and parcel of the creed, now antiquated, that an Englishman could fight three foreigners with one hand tied behind his back.

All men of every nationality are courageous in the main; most of them pretty brutal also, when they are let loose amongst those they hold to be members of an inferior race, especially when far removed from public opinion and its salutary check.

Yet, in all nationalities there are, there have been, and there will be those who rise superior to the spirit of the age in which they lived. Moreover, no one is compounded of the same ingredients all through. Butchers and bull-fighters often have their pets, to whom they are devoted. The same trait often is to be observed, even in prize-fighters.

It has been my care to bring out the best whilst never palliating the worst features of the conquistadores of the River Plate, and specially to show the part played by the women in that conquest.

This, at first sight, may appear strange, for we are quite convinced that in all Latin countries women are held in little estimation, or at the best are valued half as odalisques and half as book-keepers.

The chronicles that deal with the contemporary events are little known in England, or, for that matter, even in Spain herself. They quite suffice to show what kind of people were the conquerors of the River Plate, both as men and as administrators.

To heap up petty references to them drawn from the archives of the Indies at Seville would not be difficult; but such kind of work is in the province of an Argentine historian, and not a foreigner's. If, by good luck, I have been able to present an unbiassed picture of the curious events and of the extraordinary men of whom I treat, my labour will not have been lost.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.

ARDOCH,

August, 1923.

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THE CONQUEST OF THE RIVER PLATE

PROLOGUE

THE great viceroyalty of El Rio de la Plata, destined to become the most important of all the possessions once held by Spain in South America, comprised the Argentine Republic, Uruguay and Paraguay, together with a portion of Bolivia, then called Alto Peru. Roughly, it comprehended twenty degrees, stretching from 22° to 41° , south latitude.

The history of the conquest of this great viceroyalty is much more difficult to present intelligibly than that of New Granada, of Mexico, or of Peru.

In those three countries settled States existed, governed by kings or emperors, whose citizens had advanced some way towards a settled polity.

This was most patent in Peru, a State ruled intelligently by the Incas, who, by a system of what may be styled imperialistic socialism, had practically stamped out poverty within its bounds. The central government undertook vast public works. It carried roads across the Andes; it built great towns and temples of hewn stone, and in a measure fixed the daily task of all its citizens.

There was a well-defined theocracy; a line of kings whose records had been kept for many generations; a calendar, a priesthood, and many of the attributes of a State very far removed from barbarism existed in Peru.

In a less degree this was the case in Mexico, and

in a lesser still in New Granada, though there the sovereign power had entirely passed under one dynasty.

In the Rio de la Plata none of these things existed.

The Indians, with the exception of the Guaranis in Paraguay, were wandering savages, cruel and blood-thirsty, and yet possessed of a tribal patriotism, unreasoning but strong. Most of them were attached to their individual liberty to an incredible extent: no tribe acknowledged the authority of any king. The chiefs were generally liable to instant deposition¹ if they failed to commend themselves to the other members of the tribe. No single instance of a stone house, east of the Andes, is mentioned in the annals of the conquest. The Indian towns were but mere "rancherias,"² built either of reeds or mud and thatched with palm leaves or with straw.

At the first conquest few of the tribes wore clothes, except the "brechclout"³ and a skin cloak. In the warmer countries the men went naked, and the women wore some little covering that called attention to rather than concealed their nakedness.⁴

The territories the Indians inhabited were vast, devoid of wood upon the plains, and covered with thick forests in the north.

Such settlements as existed were usually upon the banks of rivers; fish was abundant, but game scarce, and thus the Spaniards were faced with difficulties such as were not encountered in any other conquest that they undertook.

In Mexico, in New Granada and Peru, the capitals once taken, and the kings slain or captured, the rest

¹ Cacique (chief) is a Carib word and was spread by the Spaniards throughout South America, and finally adopted into the Spanish language.

² From Rancho, a hut.

³ Brechclout is rendered in Spanish by Taparabo.

⁴ For all that, many of them were not devoid of modesty, as the old writers set forth.

was easy. The very thoroughness of the Incas' rule rendered their subjects more amenable when once the central power, to which they looked for every detail of their lives, had been destroyed. In New Granada the Spaniards had to do with an unwarlike race. Their difficulties there were due to climate, natural conditions, and the enormous distance that separated the coast from Bogotá.

In Mexico they had to face a hard and warlike race, patient of hardships, and devoted to its kings. As Montezuma's empire was highly centralized, after the city was once taken the conquest followed in due course.

In the Rio de la Plata all was different, and the experience gained in the other conquests proved of scant avail. There were no cities to attack; no kings to conquer or to kill; and as there was but little agriculture, no means by which the Spaniards could cut off supplies and starve the Indians out.

On every side the illimitable Pampa stretched, a sea of grass, grass, grass, and still more grass—a great green ocean that the wind swept over as it sweeps the seas about the Horn. In it the man who ventured out and lost his way never returned; but wandering till, exhausted, he lay down to leave his bones beside some stream, haunted by flamingoes and Magellanic swans. Only on horseback could it be safely travelled over by Europeans, and even then the risks were great. Those who were caught by night in the vast waste, tied up their horses as firmly as they could, where neither tree nor bush existed, and lay down to sleep with their heads in the direction of the next day's march, taking good care to start in the same line they had lain down in, and steering by the sun.¹

¹ When there was nothing to secure the horses to, they tied a knot in the end of their picket-rope and firmly stamped it down. The horse could not pull it out by lateral pressure, and as the sleeper, if he were

On foot, to cross the Pampa was to court death, for a man's vision in the bare steppes was so restricted, that it became almost impossible to see such landmarks as there were—a lone¹ Ombu far in the distance, the course of streams, generally marked by Pampas grass upon their banks, or the long lines of sandhills that in some places cut the plains.

In such a country, with the impossibility of killing game enough to feed themselves with the weapons of their times, the Spaniards were unable ever to strike decisive blows at the nomadic tribes.

These, after their attacks, returned back to the wilderness, with the result that up to forty years ago great tracts of country remained in their possession, from which they sallied out to ravage and to burn the settlements.

Still, by degrees the coast-line and a fringe of the interior passed under Spanish rule, and the great river systems of the Paraguay, the Parana, and Uruguay

wise, slept with his saddle as a pillow placed just above the knot, his horse could not pull vertically. If there was long grass, the traveller doubled over a bunch of it, and secured the rope to it. This made the horse quite secure.

¹ The Ombu tree, with its spongy trunk, great roots appearing above ground, and splendid foliage, was almost the only native tree upon the Pampas. One could see it miles away, offering a welcome shade. It generally grew near a house. It is the *Pircunia dioica* of botany. W. H. Hudson, himself an Argentine, chose it as the title of his great and dramatic story, "El Ombu."

It has also inspired an Argentine poet in the following lines, known to everyone in the Republic:

"Cada comarca en la Tierra
Tiene su rasgo prominente:
El Brasil, tiene su sol ardiente,
Minas de plata el Perú;
Montevideo, su cerro;
Buenos Aires, patria hermosa
Tiene su Pampa grandiosa,
La Pampa tiene el Ombú,"

LUIS L. DOMINGUEZ.

gave them an easy access to the interior. Thus the coast countries, though first visited, were really conquered from the interior, and Buenos Aires was refounded, after its first abandonment, from distant Paraguay.

There was no place in the viceroyalty for a Pizarro or Cortés, for no great city such as Cuzco or Mexico was there to conquer, nor any empire to subdue.

Many there were of the true breed of the conquistadores; patient in hardships, fertile in resource, and brave without the sense of fear; men such as Spain at that time seemed to possess above all other countries of the world. Still, few great personalities stand out, except the unlucky Alvar Núñez, whose marvellous adventures would fill many story-books, and whose achievements are writ large in his own "Commentaries."

He was a man the like of whom never appeared again in all the annals of the conquest, and, but for an evil turn of fortune and the ill-will that he evoked by his protection of the Indians, he would have gone down to history as the first figure amongst all the conquerors. Nuflo de Chaves and Domingo de Irala, Juan de Garay, Captains Salazar and Mendoza, Juan de Ayolas, and the bold soldier César, who was the first to reach the Andes from the Atlantic coast, were men of action, able administrators, not troubled with too tender consciences, always the first in any battle and the last to leave it; but they all lacked the individual magnetism that makes a leader great.

Most of these valiant captains had violent deaths, either slain by the Indians or worn out by hardships, and every one of them died poor. They carved out their places in the history of the land that they gave up their lives to conquer, with their swords; but for all that their fame is local, and their names unknown outside the annals of the conquest of the

River Plate. Nuñez alone is known to every student of the history of the New World, and he is known chiefly through his misfortunes and his ten years' captivity amongst the Indians.

Few men indeed but he, cast ashore almost naked and unarmed amongst the wildest tribes, could have risen from a pedlar, half starved and oft in peril of his life, to be almost a demi-god, revered and revered by all.

Thus, though the conquest of the River Plate shows up in high relief the dauntless courage, patience in hardships, and contempt of death to be observed in all the Spaniards of those days who passed to the New World, the story is not so dramatic as were the conquests of Peru and Mexico.

Still, it contains some episodes so curious and so romantic that they perhaps surpass in human interest all the strange episodes in the strange history of the great adventure that the Spaniards undertook.

All was unusual in the history of the conquest of the River Plate. In Mexico, in New Granada and Peru, rough soldiers with the incomparable literary touch of Bernal Diaz del Castillo or Pedro Cieza de León, chronicled in good Spanish all that they saw and did. Cortés himself wrote well and like a scholar, and Bernal Diaz tells us he knew Latin, "answering in that tongue those who addressed him in it." Quesada was an author of repute. His works are lost; but in the fragments that remain he shows himself to have been a man of education and a gentleman. Ercilla, the historian of the Chilean conquest, was a poet, and although some have called his chronicle a "newspaper in rhyme," there are not wanting flashes of true poetry in it, and the whole work abounds in curious details of the campaign, of Indian customs and of the deeds of valour on both sides. These men all fought as well as wrote, and they themselves were

often the chief actors in the scenes that they describe. Nor were there wanting churchmen and lawyers who in one capacity or other, had witnessed all that they wrote about. Of such were Fray Pedro de Aguado¹ and Fray Antonio de Medrano, who accompanied Quesada on his last ill-fated expedition to the Llanos, and left a full description of all they underwent.

The licentiate Polo de Ondegardo was at the conquest of Panama, and also in Peru, and of both conquests he has written well. Lastly, there were not wanting able navigators such as El Bachiller Enciso, who have left interesting accounts of the Indians at the first coming of the Spaniards and good descriptions of the configuration of the coasts.

All this was wanting in the history of the conquest of the River Plate.

The only record by an eye-witness of the first settlement was written by an illiterate German soldier² in his own tongue.

¹ Fray Pedro de Aguado commemorated Quesada's expedition in his "*Historia de Santa Marta y Nuevo Reino de Granada*."

He also saw and compiled a history of the conquest of Venezuela.

Fray Antonio de Medrano died of the hardships he endured on Quesada's expedition to the Llanos.

² Hulderico Schmidel, "*Historia y Descubrimiento del Rio de la Plata y Paraguay*," in Barcia's collection of "*Historiadores Primitivos de Indias*."

Schmidel was a native of Strasburg ("en Baviera," as we are informed). He really came from Straubing in Bavaria, but in the Spanish edition of his work it appears as "Estrasburgo." He seems to have been born about the beginning of the fifteenth century.

His name, Schmidel, was altered to Faber (perhaps for euphony) in the Latin translation of his book by Arturo Gothardo in the collection of "*Voyages*" published by De Brey.

Levino Hulsio found the Latin version so imperfect and the names so much disfigured that he made another version, Nuremberg, 1599. This edition had a picture of Schmidel, maps, and plates of animals and plants. From these two versions Gabriel Cardenas made his Spanish version, 1731, published by Barcia in his "*Historiadores Primitivos de Indias*." Madrid, 1749.

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He seems never to have acquired a proper knowledge of the Spanish tongue, and spells the words, especially the proper names, phonetically, as they fell on his ear.

The names of Indian tribes and villages are so distorted that it is often difficult to find out his meaning, and some, in spite of every effort of his translators, have remained indistinguishable.

His want of education and his revolt against his officers when they interfered to check his plundering, makes him a biassed witness as regards their characters, for he was not in South America to preach the Gospel, but to make his fortune.

Still, he is the one writer who saw all he wrote about, and in the main he wrote intelligently. Credulous and yet hard-headed, he was a brave and upright man according to his lights, and true as steel in every difficulty. He is the chief authority, and he who writes the history of the conquest has to rely upon him, and on the whole can do so, without much fear of going wrong.¹

In what was once the great viceroyalty of El Rio de la Plata, the present writer passed his early manhood and his youth.

Nothing was further from his mind in those days than to aspire to write its history. Perchance the experience of those years, when all the Pampa to the outward eye was little changed since the first conquest, and multitudes of ostriches, wild horses, and of deer, with myriads of birds, peopled its plains and air, may in some measure fit him for the task.

¹ Pedro de Angelis, in his "Coleccion de Obras y Documentos relativos a la historia antigua y moderna de las Provincias del Rio de la Plata," Buenos Aires, 1856-1858, says (vol. iii., p. 2):

"De todas las obras que tratan de la conquista del Rio de la Plata, la de Schmidel es la mas rara y casi puede tenerse por imprescindible."

It had naturally become rare, for in Paraguay, and even in the Buenos Aires of those days, few read Latin and still fewer, German.

CHAPTER I

ON October 8th, 1515, Juan Diaz de Solis set sail from Lepe, in the south of Spain, with either two or three caravels (for the authorities differ on the point),¹ to explore the coast of South America and find, if possible, a passage westward to the Spice Islands.

He followed, says Guzman, the track known in those days as the Route of Los Pinzones, so called from the brothers Pinzon of Palos, able navigators who had accompanied Columbus on his first voyage.

It is almost the track followed to-day by the mail steamers, for Solis made his landfall at Cape San Agustin, not far from Pernambuco, on the Brazilian coast.

Solis at that time was reckoned the first navigator of the age.

Herrera calls him "the most excellent man of his time in his art,"² and says that the king favoured him greatly. Upon the death of Amerigo Vespucci he had been appointed to the office of Chief Pilot,³ and

¹ Ruy Diaz de Guzman in his celebrated history of the conquest, "La Argentina." The dedication to "Don Alonso Perez de Guzman el Bueno mi Señor, Duque de Medina Sidonia, Conde de Niebla," etc., was written in La Ciudad de la Plata, Provincia de Charcas, a 25 de Julio, 1617.

Guzman speaks of three ships. Dean Funes mentions only two in his "Ensayo de la Historia Civil del Paraguay, Buenos Aires," etc. Buenos Ayres, 1816.

² "Era el mas excelente hombre de su tiempo, en su arte" (Decada II., lib. i., p. 11).

³ Piloto Mayor.

at the time of his expedition had enjoyed the past two years. Thirty-five years had elapsed since the discovery of America, and a fever of adventure ran in the blood of every Spaniard of the age. The nation had emerged from its eight centuries of struggle with the Moors that terminated in the same year America was discovered, strengthened, united, and, for the first time, conscious of its destiny as a conquering power. The narrow bigotry that afterwards was to prove fatal to it had hardly manifested itself, except in the expulsion of the Jews; but in this matter the Spaniards did but follow England, who had expelled them two hundred years before.

After the fashion of all conquering peoples, they believed they had a mission to civilize and to bring light into the waste places of the earth. Others have had the same belief, and with the same results.

It is a creed that makes men merciless; the Spaniards suffered from it, and so have we ourselves.

Solis set out with his ships full of warriors, some of whom, no doubt, were at the taking of Granada and had fought in Africa, ever fit for any enterprise, not worse than others of that time, nor better; but simply soldiers, inured to hardships and to blood. With Solis sailed Francisco Torres, his brother-in-law, who was an able navigator and a cosmographer of some repute.

Many representatives of the Spanish nobility were aboard his ships, for all were eager to discover and explore, in an age when it was a familiar saying, "Even tailors have turned searchers after mines."

It is alleged,¹ though without much proof, that in a

¹ "Navegando este insigne nautico por los años de 1508 con Vicente Ñanez Pinzon habia sido el primero que extendió velas europeas en el famoso Rio, Llamado entonces, Paranaguazú" ("Ensayo de la Historia Civil del Paraguay," etc., lib. i., cap. i, p. 2, por el Doctor Don Gregorio Funes, Deán de la Santa Iglesia Catedral de Cordova," Buenos Ayres,

previous voyage to Brazil in 1508, under the command of Vicente Nãñez Pinzon, the comrade of Columbus, Solis had already reached the mouth of the River Plate. No other historian except Funes (referred to in the note) makes this assertion, nor does it appear in the controversy that subsequently arose in Buenos Aires as to who was the first discoverer.

After touching in Brazil at Cape San Agustin, Solis sailed on southwards, passing Cape Santa Maria, till he began to notice that the water was discoloured, and upon trial found that it was almost fresh, and, turning landwards, entered the mouth of a vast estuary.

On every side stretched out a shallow sea of yellow waves. As they drew nearer into the river's mouth they passed the islands of Lobos, of Flores and the hill which afterwards gave its name to the city of Montevideo. Looking shorewards they must have seen, beyond the belts of wood upon the banks, the rolling prairies of the Banda Oriental del Uruguay fading away into the horizon, then as now clothed with the purple blossoms of the flower known afterwards as *La Flor Morada*¹—a veritable Purple Land.

The whole territory of what is now known as the Republic of Uruguay was inhabited by the warlike tribe of the Charruas, a nation now extinct; but it has left distinct traces of its blood amongst the Uruguayan Gauchos, especially in the wilder camps.²

Solis sailed onward, passing the little islands of

Imprenta de M. J. Gandarillas y Socios, 1816). Dean Funes gives no authority for this statement, but merely says: "Solis zarpó del puerto de Lepe el 8 de Octubre de 1515, tomando la costa sobre sus propias huellas."

¹ Flor Morada=Purple Flower. It is a borage.

² "Camp" is derived from the Spanish Campo—the country. It is universally used in the Anglicized form amongst English people in South America.

San Gabriel, opposite to where now stands the town of La Colonia, so celebrated in the history of South America and long an object of contention between Spain and Portugal.

For eight days he pushed on, hugging the coast, and seeing every now and then parties of Indians, who made signs of peace, as he imagined, waving green boughs and holding up provisions in their hands.

There is some doubt as to how far he penetrated. Some seem to think he saw the island of Martin Garcia,¹ just at the juncture of the Parana and Uruguay, and named it after a pilot whom he had on board. He does not seem to have landed on it, but, from some reason not accounted for, he must have turned again towards the river's mouth.

He himself went on before the other ships (or ship) in what Herrera calls "*una carabela Latina*"²—that is, a caravel rigged with lateen sails.

Still coasting, and being deceived by what he thought the friendly attitude of the wandering tribes of natives, and wishing to take an Indian captive³ to carry him back to Castille, a practice common amongst all the conquistadores, he landed in a boat with a few unarmed followers. This was his undoing, for a war party of the Charruas, issuing from the bushes, fell upon him and massacred him with his few followers in full view of his ship.

The place where he was slain is not known with certainty; but tradition places it upon a stream that bears his name⁴ winding between the towns of Montevideo and Maldonado, in the Republic of Uruguay.

¹ Rui Diaz de Guzman seems to indicate this; but Herrera, Dean Funes, and most of the other chroniclers do not corroborate it.

² Decada II., lib. i., p. 11.

³ "*Solis quiso . . . tomar algun hombre para Traer á Castilla*" (Herrera, Decada II., lib. i., p. 12).

⁴ El Arroyo de Solis.

Some of the chroniclers say the Indians cooked and ate his body, but there is no proof that the Charruas ever were cannibals.

On board the ship a brother of Solis and his brother-in-law Francisco Torres saw the tragedy, but were impotent to help. When they had joined the other vessels, they held a council and determined to return to Spain.

Before departing they gave the name of "El Rio de Solis"¹ to the great river that to-day is called the River Plate.

The vessels returned safely to Spain and reported to Cardinal Cisneros all that they had done and the untimely fate of their commander, Juan Diaz de Solis.

He was the first of the intrepid Spanish navigators to sail upon the yellow waters of the River Plate.²

¹ The native name was Paranaguazú, which has been said to signify "River like the sea"; at least so says Rui Diaz de Guzman, in his "Argentina," and also Barco de la Centenera in his long poem of the same name.

However, as "guazú" means "great" in Guarani, it may be that the real meaning was "River as great as is the sea." The name of Rio de la Plata arose through a misconception. Juan de Ayolas, having procured some silver from tribes trading with Peru, sent it to Spain, and there they thought it came from the territories that border on the River Plate.

² As in all cases where a great man undertakes some enterprise, there are not wanting those who, either from a spirit of captious criticism, or from a real regard for accuracy, contest his claim to the discovery. In 1884 Dr. Andres Lannero published an interesting article in *La Nueva Revista de Buenos Aires*, pointing out that Sebastian Gaboto in 1527 found three of the men who had gone ashore with Solis, still living. Their names were Melchor Ramirez (vecino de Lepe), Enrique Montes, and Francisco del Puerto.

Varnhagen, in his "Historia del Brasil" (Rio de Janeiro, 1854-1858), affirms that one Nuño Manuel visited the Rio de la Plata before Solis; but he gives no proofs of his assertion.

Manuel Telles, in his "Diego Garcia Descubridor del Rio de la Plata" (Buenos Aires, 1881), says one Diego Garcia first visited the river in 1512, and quotes "La Memoria de Diego Garcia sobre el

There is no record of his dealings with the Indians—for he was cut off before he met them—except upon the last day of his life.

His want of prudence and his over-confidence cost him dear, but he showed by his landing with a small following, and unarmed, that he was not inclined, as were so many of his compeers, to show the blessings of superior culture by a resort to arms before he even was attacked. As a navigator he stands high in the annals of his country,¹ a man who never hesitated to sail into the unknown. A skilful sailor and a born explorer, he had the gift of leadership to a supreme degree. He sealed his discovery with his blood, and though his name soon faded from the map, to be replaced by that the river bears to-day, it will not fade soon from the memory of the inhabitants of the great State that has arisen on those wild plains that he first gazed upon, standing upon the poop of his light "Latin caravel."²

After the death of Solis, ten years elapsed before

viage que hizo en 1526-1527 a la parte Austral del Continente Americano." In it Garcia seems to claim that he saw the mouth of the River Plate in 1512, but very vaguely.

¹ In a voyage he made to the low coast of Yucatan with Amerigo Vespucci and Vicente Yañez Pinzon the following curious sailing directions occur:

"Aparejadas las carabelas en que hubieran de ir Vicente Yañez Pinzon, y Juan Diaz de Solis, se les dió por instruccion . . . que todos los dias se hablasen el uno al otro una vez en la mañana y otra en la tarde, ó a lo menos una vez a la tarde, como era uso y costumbre, y que lleváre el Farol, Juan Diaz de Solis, y que concertasen ante un Escrivano, las señas con que el uno al otro se huviera de entender" (Herrera, Decada I., lib. vii., p. 189).

The voyage was unsuccessful in spite of the sailing directions, even though they had been agreed to before a notary. Solis and Pinzon, each of whom held the office of Chief Pilot, quarrelled, and on their return to Spain Solis was thrown into prison in "La Carcel Real de la Corte."

² Carabela Latina.

Spain made an effort to extend her power over the vast territories that he had discovered, destined to prove to his descendants the most important of the republics of the New World.

When Charles V. finally put down the dissensions that had rent the country during the lifetime of his father and at his own accession to the throne,¹ he turned his eyes once more to the Americas.

It was full time for him to do so, for the Portuguese were rapidly extending their power and conquests in Brazil. The court in Lisbon had prepared with every secrecy an expedition under Diego Garcia, of the port of Moguer, and the pilot Rodrigo de Cerca to follow up the discovery of Solis. It set sail from La Coruña on August 15th, 1526, and was composed of one large ship and two of smaller size.

The secret measures of the Portuguese had not escaped the notice of Sebastian Gaboto,² who at that time held the office of Chief Pilot³ under the Spanish crown.

Born in Venice, and himself the son of a famous navigator, Gaboto was recognized as one of the first astronomers of the age. It is well known he offered his services to Henry VII. of England and undertook his celebrated voyage to Newfoundland in the service of that prince. However, it was not the wont of the astute Welshman who has been so well described under the title of "the Crowned Attorney" to requite his servants well. Few meaner (or more able) monarchs ever sat upon a throne than he, or his contemporary

¹ The revolt of the Comuneros under Juan Bravo and Juan Padilla. Charles defeated them at the battle of Villalar, and stamped out liberty in Spain. Up to that time Spain had been one of the freest countries in Europe.

² Known in England as Cabot.

³ Piloto Mayor.

and opponent, Ferdinand the Catholic King, in many a struggle about pelf.

Disgusted with the ingratitude of the English court, Gaboto found protection with the Emperor Charles V. The Emperor gave him the title of Chief Pilot, and Gaboto at once set about to show that he was worthy of it. The riches of the Moluccas, Ophir, and Cathay were at that time a sort of *ignis fatuus* to everyone in Spain.

All her best navigators were straining to find out some passage to them that should obviate the long voyage by the Cape of Good Hope, and spare them the perpetual battle with the Monsoon in the Indian Ocean, and the great risk of pirates, to which they were exposed in all the Eastern seas. Gaboto fanned the flame, and after having come to an agreement with several rich merchants of the town of Seville, at that time the most important of the Spanish ports, he set about preparing an expedition that was to arrive at the Moluccas by the way of Magellan's Straits. The Emperor looked on the project favourably, and granted a subsidy towards the equipment of the fleet.

Intrigues of various kinds set on foot by his rivals detained Gaboto for some time after his fleet was ready for the sea. Similar intrigues delayed Columbus, and were certain to arise in cases of a like nature, when the command of an expedition was given to a foreigner, in such a jealous land as Spain. At last, in April, 1580, he set out with a fleet of four vessels and about six hundred men.

From the first he was unlucky, for the voyage turned out longer than he expected, provisions were insufficient, and his crews mutinous. Provisions ran so short that he was forced to put in to the port of Patos in Brazil, at that time occupied by the Guaranis and Tupis, one of the least savage of the tribes of South America.

These Indians¹ received him well and furnished him with food.

For some reason not explained Gaboto repaid the Indians' hospitality by carrying off four sons of the most powerful chiefs, quite in the spirit of Solis, who had wished to take some Indian captive to carry him to Spain. Not content with this, he then marooned three gentlemen of quality upon a desert island, a cruel and barbarous proceeding destined to cost him dear.

He then abandoned the idea of sailing through the straits to the Moluccas and set out for the River Plate. He entered it, following the track Solis had sailed upon, and anchored off the islands of St. Gabriel.²

The anchorage at the islands did not seem safe to Gaboto's experienced eye. Indeed, the place is but an open roadstead at the best, exposed to the full force of the furious south-west gales, known as Pamperos, in the River Plate. So he went on to the mouth of the River San Juan, in Uruguay. There he recovered the three sailors who had been taken by the Indians when Solis was killed. They had become half Indians, had learned the language, and subsequently were of great service to him as interpreters.

He built a little fort to serve as base, and sent off Captain Juan Alvarez Ramon to explore the River Uruguay.³

¹ The Tupis or Tupinambás occupied all the southern maritime provinces of Brazil. The Guaranis, a branch of the same people, or at least a kindred tribe, speaking the same language with dialectic differences, was settled in Paraguay and what are now the Argentine provinces of Corrientes and Misiones.

The legend was that there were two brothers in ancient times called Tupi and Guaraní. These quarrelled and separated, and from them sprang the two nations. The legend is given by Barco de la Centenera in his long poem "La Argentina."

² Las Islas de San Gabriel. They are situated in the River Plate near the town of La Colonia in Uruguay.

³ Uruguay is said to mean the River of the Vultures.

Captain Ramon managed to run his ship ashore, a very easy thing to do in those days, when the vast expanse of shallow, yellow water that forms the estuary of the River Plate was quite uncharted and unknown.

He, with the greater part of the crew, landed with the idea of marching back along the coast to the fort on the San Juan.

The rest were packed into his only boat and rowed along the shore. Hardly had Ramon begun his march before he fell into an ambush, laid by the Charrua Indians, and lost his life together with the greater portion of his men. Some few by swimming reached the boat, which arrived safely at the fort.

Gaboto then sailed up the river as far as latitude 32° (south), and built a fort¹ that he called Santi Espiritu upon the River Caracañal. This fort was destined to play a considerable part throughout the first part of the conquest, and to be the scene of a most striking and romantic episode. From the fort he sent off one Captain César with three companions to explore and find a road across the Andes to Peru. After a thousand perils César accomplished the almost incredible feat, and joined the conquerors of Peru.

The expedition of these four indomitable Spanish soldiers was one of the most memorable of the marches made in all the conquest of the River Plate. Alone amongst a multitude of tribes, all hostile, and in numbers sufficient to have overwhelmed them instantly had they been so inclined, without a map, and steering by the compass and the stars, they were, indeed, "conquistadores," having conquered fear.

Their journey lay through trackless forests, wide marshes, and, now and then, great plains on which the grass even to-day grows so luxuriantly that when

¹ It became known generally as La Torre de Gaboto.

on horseback it rises to the knees. Still they pushed on, vanquishing every difficulty, and reached Peru without the death of any one of them.

Gaboto, when he had finished his historic feat, set out again. An interesting voyage it must have been amongst the myriads of islands, at first clothed to the water's edge with weeping-willow that, as he slowly advanced with sails¹ and oars, gradually changed to thickets of bamboo. On the right bank he had the open plains of what is now the State of Entre Rios, with little wood except along the banks of rivers, and that stunted and thorny, and on the left the Chaco with its swampy plains dotted with islands of tall palms. Indians all crowned with feathers, seated in their canoes must have fled timidly towards the shore, as what appeared to them the monster vessel, slowly lumbered on. The blood-and-orange banner with the lions and castles floated out in the light air, or, hanging limp as the vessel neared the tropics, wrapped round the jackstaff on the poop, giving it the air as of a gigantic caterpillar.

The animals must all have been so tame that the sight of the ship encroaching on their Eden could not have startled them. Tapirs and capibaras most probably swam placidly, and alligators basking on the sands would scarcely raise their heads as the slow pageant passed. The look-out on the forecastle, if he were a true Spaniard, most probably was half asleep, whilst on the poop, Gaboto, in his buff coat and his steel helmet, stood surrounded by his officers.

It was indeed an epoch-making voyage, and one never to be repeated, for, for the first time, the great river was giving up secrets maintained inviolable from the creation of the world. All was unknown and new, and quite unlike the experiences of any of the Spanish

¹ "A remo y vela" ("La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman, p. 23).

navigators who had sailed eastward in their quest for Ophir and Cathay.

There they met settled nations, living in great well-built cities, and men often much more advanced in civilization than themselves; men whose existence had been known to Europe, and who had had some sort of fitful commerce and communication with her by caravan since the first dawn of history. On the great river's banks Gaboto was exploring there were no cities, and man was still unchanged, since he had been created or had developed from some other anthropoid. No one knew what a bend in the river concealed by islands and by vegetation might disclose. All was unfamiliar, the trees and plants, all the configuration of the constellations, the reptiles, fish, the many-coloured birds, the shrieking parrots and the macaws floating like little aeroplanes around the palm trees; stranger still the Indians.

Not one of the adventurous travellers of modern times in Africa had the experience of Gaboto and his men. Spain was a million miles away to them, and help impossible, whereas in Africa most of the explorers knew where they were going to and all maintained some sort of communication with their base. Besides, most of them, at least in the last hundred years, were well equipped with arms of relative precision compared with the rough and clumsy arquebuses and the cross-bows that served the Spaniards for artillery.

Medical science had advanced, and all the African explorers had quinine at least, and styptics for their wounds. Gaboto had but the actual cautery and the fat of any animal they killed. Quite undismayed by all the novelty of their surroundings, Gaboto and his men pushed on (with sails and oars) until they reached the confluence of the Parana and Paraguay. Entering the Parana he reached the rapids, passed La

Laguna de Santa Ana and, as some say, came within sight of the great falls that barred his passage up the stream. If this was so, he was the first to see them¹ and should have the credit of it.

When Gaboto found his further passage up the Parana barred by the rapids and the falls, he retraced his steps to the spot where the Paraguay and Parana join one another, arriving there in 1527.

He then sailed with his two little vessels up the Paraguay until he reached the territory of the Agaces, a warlike tribe of canoe Indians, the strongest on the Paraguay. With a fleet of three hundred canoes they barred his passage up the stream. To return back without a struggle was to lose all prestige, so he drove both his vessels into the thickest of the enemy and cut a passage through. Two of his men, Juan Fuster and Hector de Acuña, were taken prisoners, but were afterwards recovered and became good interpreters.²

¹ Rui Diaz de Guzman, in "La Argentina" (Coleccion de Angelis), has a remarkable description of the falls, and the first that is known to have been penned:

"... hasta entrar en este del Parana por el canal subiendo treinta leguas esta aquel estraño salto (el Salto de Guayrá) que entiendo ser la mas maravillosa obra de naturaleza que hay. Porque la furia y velocidad con que cae todo el cuerpo de agua de este rio son mas de 200 estados por once canales haciendo todos ellos humo espesísimo en la region del aire por los vapores que causan. De aquel abajo es imposible poderse navegar con tantas vertientes que hace, con grandes remolinos y borbullones que se levantan como nevados cerros. Cae toda el agua de este salto en una peña como caja guarnecida de duras rocas y peñas en que se estienden todo el rio un tiro de flecha teniendo por lo alto del salto mas de dos leguas de ancho, de donde se reparte en estos canales, que no hay ojos ni cabeza humana que lo pueden mirar sin desvanecerse y perder la vista. Oyese el ruido de este salto ocho leguas y se ve el humo y vapor de estas caidas mas de seis, como una nube blanquisca."

The description is exact and possibly has never been surpassed either for accuracy or vividness.

² "Recibiendo de su prision muy gran bien (sic) porque salieron grandes lenguas y practicos en la tierra" (Rui Diaz de Guzman).

After this victory, that curiously enough was welcomed by many of the tribes who had been tyrannized by the Agaces, Gaboto reached Mount Lambaré, not far from where now stands Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay.

He had now entered the territory of the Guaranis, who were the gentlest and most civilized of all the Indian tribes.

These Indians, destined to play so great a part in the history of the River Plate, and amongst whom the Jesuits made their famous settlements in after years, came out to greet Gaboto as a conqueror. They trooped down to the river bank all crowned with feathers and unarmed, and with thin plates of silver hanging from their necks. Naturally these plates of silver were what most attracted Gaboto and his men, as silver (in default of gold) has always been the pole star of all conquerors, French, Spanish, English, or of whatever nationality. These plates of silver soon passed into Gaboto's hands, in exchange for the currency the conquistadores used in all their dealings with the Indians, hawk-bells, looking-glasses, and red cloth.

No one of the historians of the River Plate has specified the quantity of silver that Gaboto thus obtained. It must have been considerable, for he at once despatched it off to Spain. Herrera¹ says it was the first silver to arrive from the New World. In this he contradicts himself, for in his second decade, that recounts the chief events of the year 1519, he tells us that the first silver was sent from Mexico by Hernando

¹ Herrera was the official historian of the conquest and is perhaps the most important, certainly the most compendious, of the historians of the Indies. His history is entitled "*Historia General de los Hechos de los Castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Oceano.*" Madrid, 1789. It has numerous plates of Indians and of the fauna and flora of the various countries he describes, many plans of towns and maps, and a whole gallery of portraits (more or less authentic) of the chief conquistadores.

de Cortés, in the same year of which he writes. From this silver, that the Guaranis had evidently obtained from Peru (for no mines have ever been discovered in Paraguay), arose the name of Rio de la Plata,¹ which soon supplanted that of Rio de Solis. The Guaranis amongst whom Gaboto found himself were extremely numerous, very light in colour, amiable in disposition, and quite unwarlike. They seem to have had a singular aptitude for music, and this the Jesuits encouraged very successfully in their celebrated Missions on the Uruguay and Parana.

Gaboto was not the first European to penetrate into their territory. The crown of Portugal, always on the alert to supplant the Spaniards in their conquests and open up communications from the Atlantic to Peru, had impressed on its governor of San Vicente, Martin Alfaro de Sosa, to leave no stone unturned.

He had despatched, a little before Gaboto had left Spain, an expedition under an officer called Alejo Garcia with four companions to search for mines. As there was neither gold nor silver in Brazil, these five intrepid men, in spite of the tremendous distance and the dangers of the road, set out through the dense forest country near the coast, traversed it with Indian guides, emerged upon an open country that was probably the modern province of Parana, and struck the River Paraguay somewhere above Asuncion. Here Garcia, who must have been a born diplomatist, induced two thousand² Guaranis to join him and to pursue the march towards Peru.

¹ So did Amerigo Vespucci give his name to a country that rightfully should have been called Colombia.

² Rui Diaz de Guzman gives the number as 2,000 in his "Argentina." It seems large, but most probably the Indians were influenced by the hope of reaching the Peruvian mines, as they seem always to have maintained desultory relations with Peru, on account of the precious metals.

Garcia and his Indians reached the Andes at the towns of Presto and Tarabuco, where they remained some time. With a large amount of silver they set out to return to Paraguay.

All had gone well with the five adventurous Portuguese up to that time. The Indians had accompanied them loyally and no dispute had taken place.

Then, moved as Rui Diaz de Guzman says,¹ "by their bad inclination, which makes it natural for them to do ill, for they have no stability in friendship or good faith," the Indians fell upon them in the night. Garcia and his companions were all massacred, except a little boy, Garcia's son, whom Rui Diaz de Guzman says he saw in after years.

Gaboto seems to have come upon relics of this unfortunate explorer amongst the Indians of the Paraguay, and to have gathered details of their fate. Before Garcia's death, he had sent off one of his companions to report to the Governor of San Vicente and to inform him of the richness of the land. The Governor at once equipped some sixty men, under a captain called Jorge Sedeño, to join Garcia on his march. All went well with the expedition until they reached the Parana. Here he arranged with the Indians to ferry them across. These "natives"² came with holes in their canoes, plugged up with leaves and mud. In the middle of the stream they opened the holes, and as the Portuguese were weighed down with their armour, they nearly all were drowned.

A few struggled ashore, and were at once massacred as they emerged upon the bank.

Captain Sedeño at once attacked the Indians, who

¹ "Por su mala inclinacion que es en ellos natural de hacer mal, sin tener estabilidad en el bien ni amistad" ("La Argentina," p. 19).

² "Estos Naturales." In Spanish the word has not the offensive sound it has acquired in English.

were in considerable force ambushed behind the trees. The battle was disastrous for the Portuguese. Sedeño and the greater portion of his remaining men were slain, and but a straggling handful reached the settlements.

This seems to have been the last incursion made by the Portuguese in Paraguay until, in later days, the Paulistas¹ raided the Jesuit settlements for slaves.

Whilst Gaboto was still in the River Paraguay continuing his explorations, news reached him that a fleet had arrived in the River Plate, under the command of Diego Garcia, with superior powers to those Gaboto held.

Garcia,² accompanied by the pilot Rodrigo de Cerca, had set out with three ships from the Port of La Coruña on August 15th, 1526.

He had received orders from the Spanish crown to continue the explorations of Solis. From one cause or another his expedition had encountered various delays, and so had given time to Gaboto to slip off in April of the same year (1526) and be beforehand with him. Upon the news of his arrival, Gaboto instantly set off downstream, taking a strong contingent of his men. These soldiers, who at the first had been opposed to him, most probably because he was a foreigner in Spain, after they had their experience of his qualities in leadership, had become devoted to him. Quite naturally, neither Gaboto nor his men looked with much favour on the new-comers. Gaboto, who to the talents of a leader united those of a diplo-

¹ The Paulistas were a half-caste race from the province and city of São Paulo in Brazil. Their depredations almost ruined the Jesuit towns, and caused them to undertake a great migration that is described in moving terms by Father Ruiz Montoya, in his "Conquista Espiritual del Paraguay."

² Garcia was a native of Moguer, near Huelva, a port that had supplied Columbus with many of his men.

matist, so placed the situation before Garcia that he at once saw there was no place for both of them in the same territories. To avoid a struggle, in which most certainly he would have had the worst, exposed to the attack of Gaboto's veterans, he prudently withdrew, and after leaving those of his men who wished to serve under Gaboto, he returned to Spain.

Gaboto now was at the zenith of his fame, but, like a prudent man, determined to leave nothing undone to secure himself.

So in Garcia's fleet he sent his messengers to Spain to see the Emperor and lay before him all that their general had done. These messengers were Fernando Calderon and a man with the strange name of Jorge Barlogue,¹ whom some have thought to be an Englishman, George Barlow; but be that as it may, both men stood high in the estimation of their general.

Nor was his confidence misplaced, for so well did Gaboto's messengers set forth their case that the Emperor promised him his help in all his undertakings, and overlooked the fact that he had supplanted Garcia, who was sent out accredited from court.

After the arrangement that Gaboto came to with Garcia, he returned to his fort of Santi Espiritu upon the River Caracañal, on the east side of the Parana.

Being a prudent man and anxious to consolidate his position, he tried by every means to conciliate the Timbues Indians, in whose territory he had built his fort. The Timbues, though not so gentle as the Guaranis, still were by no means one of the most savage tribes. The treatment they received at the hands of Gaboto made friends of them, and as long as he remained in his command relations were not strained.

¹ "Histoire du Paraguay," par Le R. Père Francois Charlevoix, Paris, MDCCLVI., tome vi.

A very different state of things was going on at the fort of San Juan, in Uruguay, that Gaboto had made over to those of Garcia's followers who had elected to remain.

These men, unused to the New World and inexperienced in the management of a weak post placed in the midst of powerful enemies, soon made themselves detested by the warlike Charrua Indians. After the fashion of men unused to Indian warfare, and not aware that when the Indians seemed most peaceable they should be upon their guard against surprise, the Spaniards were all sleeping peacefully without a proper watch, when the Indians, stealthily crawling through the grass, surprised and took the fort. Most of the soldiers were killed as they were sleeping, but a few escaped aboard their ship. The fort was burned and not a vestige of it left, and the chance of a settlement in Uruguay was lost. Three years had passed since the despatch of the two messengers to Spain, and still Gaboto was without news from Spain, and did not know that his ambassadors had been successful in their task.

Consumed with natural anxiety, and well aware that in his quality of foreigner he was peculiarly exposed to rivalries and intrigues in Spain, and specially afraid that the friends of Garcia would urge him on to vindicate his rights, he sailed for Spain in 1530 to press his claims to be made governor.

The Emperor received him well, treated him with distinction, and conferred the title of Captain-General of the Rio de la Plata on him, with various privileges.

All seemed to favour him, and he was just about to get a fleet together when an order came from court forbidding him to go.

His sin had found him out, for the three noblemen he had marooned upon the island had managed to

escape, and coming back to Spain, loudly called out for justice on the man who had abandoned them amongst the savage tribes. As they were men of good position, and the treatment they had received was flagrant in its injustice and its cruelty, justice for once removed the bandage from her eyes, and in a day or two after the title was conferred, the Emperor nullified it.

Gaboto never returned to the scene of his adventures, but he was much regretted,¹ for he had given proofs of sterling qualities, a great capacity to rule and of a valour above proof, joined to an affability in private life that made him popular.

Before he sailed for Spain, he had left the fort of Santi Espiritu well provisioned for defence, with a sufficient garrison and an experienced soldier in command.

Nuño de Lara was this captain's name, a man renowned for prudence and for valour and a strict disciplinarian. Gaboto had impressed on him to treat the Indians well and to endeavour to conciliate them by all means in his power. This shows Gaboto was a man of greater foresight than were most of the conquistadores.

Lara thoroughly appreciated the wisdom of his orders, and by his prudent conduct and strict discipline maintained for two years an unbroken peace. Never before had such harmonious relations existed with the Indians. They came and went almost unchecked about the fort, brought in provisions and never molested hunting parties that the Spaniards sent out to look for game. In fact, it looked as if the beginnings of a colony were quite assured.

¹ "Salió con mucho sentimiento de los que quedaban por ser un hombre afable, de gran valor y prudencia, muy experto y practico en la cosmografía" ("La Argentina," Guzman, p. 24).

An unforeseen and most romantic accident upset the plans so sagely laid down by Gaboto and so well followed up by Lara, and involved in ruin everyone concerned. The great chief of the Timbues of those days was called Mangora. His brother, named Seripo, was his lieutenant and his heir. These brothers were so friendly to the Spaniards that not infrequently they even were invited by the garrison to the rude feasts they held. Mangora at one of them must have first seen the beautiful Lucia de Hurtado, and conceived for her the passion that was to cost him not alone his life, but hers and those of almost the whole garrison.

There were few Spanish women at that time in South America, but a young captain called Sebastian Hurtado had brought his wife Lucia, who all the chroniclers say was beautiful, to share his perils with him in the frontier fort.

Their story is set forth at length both by Rui Diaz de Guzman and by the Archdeacon of Buenos Aires, Barco de la Centenara, in his rhyming chronicle.¹

¹ Both works are called "La Argentina." The author of the chronicle in verse was Martin del Barco Centenera. He accompanied the Adelantado Zárate to Buenos Aires in 1572. Thus he wrote within fifty years of the events he describes and when the memory of them was fresh in all men's minds. No doubt he knew many of the chief actors in the first conquest, in their old age.

After a long residence, first in Buenos Aires and then in Lima, he returned to Spain in 1590 to publish his poem, but died in Lisbon, where he published his book in 1602. His poem is long and diffuse, but contains many curious details.

In Lima he was reduced to great poverty.

Of the ladies of Lima he says:

"Las Limeñas que se ponen que es contento
No se muestran esquivas ni tiranas
Que escuchan a quien quiere requebrarlas
Y dicen so el rebozo chistes a ellos
Con que engañan a veces los bobillos."

For a churchman he seems to have observed "Las Limeñas" with a discerning eye.

According to Dean Funes, Mangora, though a barbarian, could not resist the inflaming darts of love. Why a barbarian¹ should be less likely to be inflamed by Cupid's darts than any other man of those called civilized the good Dean does not inform us; but in such matters he is entitled to plead benefit of clergy.

Naturally the lady, being of a sex to whom love means a great deal more than it can ever mean to a man, at once perceived how matters stood. She tried "to hide from the envious glances of the barbarian those eyes whose sparkles had lighted such a flame."² Lucia, who, besides her beauty, seems to have been endowed with prudence, did all within her power never to see the chief, knowing full well that the small garrison of the isolated fort would be in danger in the event of a general attack.

Indeed, its situation was precarious at the best of times, for in the territories of El Rio de la Plata there was no help to be expected, and the few soldiers in the fort of the San Juan in Uruguay had been dispersed, and lived from hand to mouth, waiting for a ship from Spain to succour them. So that the fort of Santi Espiritu stood like a pin's head, alone upon the map.

The chief by various stratagems tried to get the lady in his power. They were all baffled by her husband, who kept a close guard on his wife.

His ill success inflamed the passion of the Indian, and after a consultation with his brother Seripo, who at first tried to turn him from his project, they laid a most ingenious plan.

¹ "Mangora a pesar de ser barbaro no pudo resistir los tiros inflamados del amor" (Ensayo de la Historia de Tuxuman; Dean Funes, p. 16).

² The Dean acquits himself very prettily on a subject that he should only have treated at second hand. However, one of the complaints the Archbishop of Lima had against him, was his first-hand acquaintance with the matter

They knew that a direct attack upon the fort, with the arms that they had at their disposal, was to expose themselves to certain failure. Nuño de Lara, when he was informed by Captain Hurtado of the chief's designs upon his wife, redoubled his precautions, and the whole garrison was upon the alert.

The brother chieftains secretly assembled three or four thousand Indians, whom they kept hidden in the woods.

They watched their opportunity until they knew that Captain Rodriguez Mosquera¹ had been sent out with fifty followers to seek provisions, and thus had left the garrison debilitated. Mangora, at the head of thirty Indians, all laden with provisions, arrived before the fort.

He tendered the commander (Lara) these as a proof of friendship. Lara for once was taken off his guard, and as the chief had come a long way from his village, offered him hospitality inside the fort. After a banquet, at which the chief swore friendship to the Spaniards, they retired to rest. When they were sleeping Mangora set fire to the room where all the arms were kept, and rushing to the door opened it to the Indians, who had crept up stealthily out of their ambushes and were ready to attack. Then they rushed in shouting their war-cries and fell upon the garrison, who for the most part were asleep. Two captains, Perez de Vargas and Oviedo, secured their arms out of the burning room, and after killing countless Indians fell, fighting to the last. Nuño de Lara was unarmed save for his sword. With it he performed prodigies, killing an Indian at each stroke, and although wounded by an arrow in the side, fought his way through the thickest of his foes until he reached the chief.

¹ Rui Diaz de Guzman ("La Argentina") calls the captain Garcia.

With his last breath he plunged his sword into the chief, and both fell dead at the same time.¹

Lara fell like a Spanish captain of those days, with his face to the foe and fighting to the last.

He was the first of the conquistadores of the River Plate to fall in conflict, for Solis was set upon and slain almost before he had the time to strike a blow.

Now that the cloud of misconceptions on both sides has cleared away, and the republics look towards Spain as the metropolis and cradle of their race, the land from which they have inherited their blood and speech, it would be fitting and most meet that the first Spaniard to be slain in actual fight, battling in defence of the first Spanish fort within the territory, should have his statue set up somewhere in Buenos Aires, the city that he helped unconsciously to found.

After the Indians had massacred the last man of the garrison, they burned the fort, sparing but a few women and young children.

Amongst the former was Lucia Miranda de Hurtado. The prisoners were all taken to Seripo, who, by his brother's death, was now head chief. The instant he cast eyes upon Lucia, he was struck with the same passion² for her that had cost his brother's life. He threw himself at the fair captive's feet, offering anything within his power if she would give herself to him.

With a serene and a disdainful air³ she answered she would prefer the hardest slavery.

¹ Dean Funes (p. 18) here forgets he was a churchman, and becoming once again an ordinary man exclaims, "Ambos cayeron muertos, pero Lara con la satisfaccion de dar su ultimo suspiro, sobre el barbaro." His spirit does him honour, and his brief lapse from strict propriety no doubt is blotted out.

² "Una centella escapada de sus cenizas prendió en el alma del nuevo cacique."

³ "Con un ayre sereno y desdeñoso" (Dean Funes).

Seripo, who seems, though a barbarian, to have had as much perception in these matters as any graduate of a more subtle school, treated her with the most complete respect,¹ hoping that time would bend her to his will.

Next day Captains Mosquera and Sebastian Hurtado returned from the expedition on which they had been sent. Their horror and amazement may be well imagined when they saw nothing but a heap of smoking ruins where the fort had stood, and the bodies of their dead comrades festering in the sun. Mosquera, like a prudent soldier, at once entrenched himself and his remaining men, and as they had gone out all fully armed, they were too formidable for the Indians to attack.

Sebastian Hurtado, hearing his wife was still alive and in the Indian's power, notwithstanding all that his companions could do, without delaying for a moment set out alone to see the chief. The chief in a fury immediately had him fastened to a tree, and ordered his young men to shoot their arrows at him.

Lucia, seeing what was happening, broke loose and, rushing to the place, threw herself at the chief's feet and begged her husband's life so earnestly that he consented, but on condition that Hurtado should at once choose another wife from amongst the maidens of the tribe.

He warned the unlucky pair that in the future it would be death to them if they indulged in any "matrimonial licences."²

However, he permitted them to see each other now and then. Most likely the astute barbarian had merely laid a trap for them, into which he was certain they would fall.

¹ "Histoire du Paraguay" (Le R. Père Charlevoix, Paris, MDCCLVI., tome vi.).

² "Que en adelante no se tratasen con las licencias de la union conyugal."

They fell into it, and, surprised in one another's arms, the chief threw off the mask of kindness that he had assumed for his own ends, and ordained that they should die. The unfortunate Lucia was fastened to a stake and burned, her husband being forced to witness his wife's martyrdom. Then, tied up to a tree, the Indians shot their arrows at him, whilst he, "with his eyes turned to heaven, besought our Lord to pardon all his sins, and by whose mercy we may believe that he and his wife enjoy celestial glory."¹ All of which happened in the year 1532."

Such was their idyll, the first love drama in which Europeans bore a part in the New World. The circumstances were so unusual, the setting so exotic and so wild, and the ending of the tragedy so poignant, that all the annals of the conquest hold no parallel. The simple but sententious comment of Rui Diaz de Guzman² forms the best epitaph on the unlucky pair. There can be few who do not hope that both the husband and the wife, after their steadfast love and tragic fate, are now enjoying celestial glory, as the stout captain³ so piously believed.

¹ "Puestos los ojos en el cielo suplicaba a Nuestro Señor le perdonase sus pecados, de cuya misericordia es de creer, estan gozando de su santa gloria marido y mujer. Todo lo cual pasó en le año 1532" ("La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman, p. 29).

² See above note.

³ Rui Diaz de Guzman was a cadet of the great House of Medina Sidonia. His father was Alonso Riquelme de Guzman, generally referred to by his son and the other chroniclers as Captain Riquelme. He was born at Jerez de la Frontera.

In 1540, "he passed to the Indies" (pasó a los Indias) with the Adelantado, Alvar Nuñez Cabeça de Vaca, his uncle. Captain Riquelme married Doña Ursula de Irala, daughter of the celebrated Domingo Martinez de Irala, Governor of Paraguay.

"La Argentina" is dedicated to Don Alonso Perez de Guzman el Bueno mi Señor, Duque de Medina Sidonia, Conde de Niebla, etc.

The dedication is dated "en la Ciudad de la Plata, Provincia de Charcas, el 25 de Julio, 1612."

Mosquera, with the remnant of the garrison that had entrenched itself, repaired the fort. Why he did not fall upon the Indians and rescue Lucia and her husband, or die fighting in the attempt, is not explained or easily explainable, considering the character of the Spaniards of those days.

It soon became apparent that with the Indians hostile to him he could not maintain himself for any length of time, as it became impossible to sally out to get provisions, and all the stores from Spain had been consumed.

The fort was then abandoned, and Mosquera with his men sailed down the river to a port called Inga, some four and twenty leagues from San Vicente, in Brazil. The Indians totally destroyed¹ his hasty reconstructions, and the whole area of the River Plate remained abandoned to its primitive inhabitants.

The prologue is so simple and sincere and conceived so absolutely in the spirit of the times, that I transcribe it entire:—

“No sin falta de justa consideracion discreto lector, me movi a un atento ageno de mi profesion, que es militar; tomando la pluma para escribir estos anales del descubrimiento, poblacion y conquista del Rio de la Plata; donde en diversas armadas pasaron mas de cuatro mil españoles y entre ellos muchos nobles y personas de buena calidad, todos los cuales acabaron sus vidas en aquellas tierras con las mayores miserias hambres y guerras, de cuantas se han padecido en las Indias, no quedando de ellos mas memoria que una fama comun y confusa de su lamentable tradicion.”

¹ Alvar Nuñez Cabeça de Vaca eventually rebuilt the fort, calling it Buena Esperanza. On some old maps it is called Corpus Christi, but was usually referred to in those days as La Torre de Gaboto. The mound where it stood is still visible, but there is no monument to Lucia and her husband.

In most of the South American republics, the wars of independence, that were not particularly glorious to either side, seem to have entirely obliterated the infinitely more glorious episodes of the conquest. Columbia and Venezuela are planted thickly with statues of Bolivar, and in the other republics, local celebrities in bronze abound in every square and open space, but statues of the first conquerors are rare.

Mosquera, who with the remnant of the garrison of Santi Espiritu had established himself near San Vicente, was at once attacked by the Portuguese under their governor, Martin Alfonso de Sosa. A ceaseless war was always raging between the Spaniards and the Portuguese in South America. Treaties were made and Popes decreed the limits of their several territories, but still the war raged on. For several centuries the little town of La Colonia, just opposite to Buenos Aires upon the Uruguayan side, repeatedly changed hands, until at last it was adjudged to Spain. The same thing happened with the isle of Santa Catalina in Brazil, until it fell under the permanent dominion of the Portuguese.

Although Mosquera's numbers were but small, all of his men were seasoned fighters, accustomed to the climate and to the vicissitudes of an explorer's life.

Sosa, upon the other hand, had numbers, but composed for the most part of green and untried soldiers newly come out from Portugal. In the pride of his fancied strength he sent a messenger to Mosquera telling him he must either swear allegiance to the crown of Portugal or leave the place forthwith.

Nothing was better calculated to wound Spanish pride. The Spaniards had always looked upon the Portuguese somewhat in the light of poor relations, and therefore, though they were in such a weak position that they could scarcely hope to resist the overwhelming forces that Sosa had at his command, they instantly defied him, telling him to do his worst. A curious stroke of fortune placed the two parties more on an equality.

It happened that a French corsair had put into the port¹ for fresh provisions and to fill her water barrels.

By night, with muffled oars, the Spaniards ran

¹ Inga, a little place, now almost forgotten.

alongside the pirate, boarded and took her, and with the arms and ammunition that they pillaged, found themselves well equipped. Sosa, with a well-appointed force, advanced quite confidently to where the Spaniards were entrenched, knowing they had few arms and little ammunition for them.

As he advanced with trumpets sounding and flags flying, thinking to gain an easy victory, he was received by a hot fire from several pieces of artillery that had been taken from the ship. Under the cover of the fire of this artillery the Spaniards made a general advance, and having rolled back the Portuguese to San Vicente, entered it at their heels, sacked it completely, and returned to Inga laden with booty after they had fired the town. Knowing they could not long maintain themselves in the face of the reinforcements that the Portuguese were sure to send, in the spring of 1584, Mosquera and his men returned to the isle of Santa Catalina, at that time a possession of the Spanish crown. There they maintained themselves for a long series of years, and the position proved of great service to the Spaniards both in the conquest and the settlement of the River Plate.

Mosquera, when he sailed away leaving the ruins of La Torre de Gaboto¹ still smoking, had probably either forgotten the existence of the soldier César and his three companions, or thought they had been slain by the Indians on their adventurous march.

However, they had reached the frontiers of Peru and been well entertained by a chief whom they dignified under the name of "King."² This "king" was rich in silver and in gold.

¹ Santi Espiritu.

² He had the sanction of Holy Writ, for probably Chedorlaomer and his bold compeers were but small Sheikhs, and Sheikh and Cacique are as near to one another in dignity as presbyter and priest.

César, whose thirst for journeys and adventures was no whit abated, resolved to return to La Torre de Gaboto and report. After great hardships and adventures, he arrived where once the fort had stood, and found that his commander (Gaboto) had long ago returned to Spain, the fort in ruins and not a single Spaniard left alive. His position was most perilous. The chief Seripo must have been flushed with victory, enraged against the Spaniards, and rendered furious by his ill-starred love-making. César had been two years upon the road. He had but three companions, and such Indians as he had been able to attach to him. There were no vessels to descend the river, or means to build a boat. Still he was undismayed, and once again set his face towards the Andes, hoping to arrive at Cuzco and join the conquerors of the Inca, known to the Spaniards by the name of the White King.¹

There are scant records of this, his third adventurous journey, except that he achieved his object, and is reported to have said that on a peak he saw at the same time the Atlantic² and the Pacific, a manifest mistake.

No Spaniards were left after César had departed, and all the efforts of Gaboto and Solis seemed destined to remain infructuous. The high-sounding, but erroneous name of Rio de la Plata still remained, and proved the "magnet" that once more induced the Spanish crown to undertake a conquest whose value, dazzled as were the Spaniards by the rich mines of Mexico and of Peru, they never understood.

¹ El Rey Blanco.

² "Aunque a esto no me he podido persuadir, por la distancia que hay de un mar á otro" ("La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman, p. 35).

CHAPTER II

FOR two years nothing more was done towards the occupation of the great territory that Solis had discovered, and that Gaboto had done something to explore, and then to settle, so disastrously.

He himself, for reasons that have not been preserved, was never again allowed to return to his illusory government. The crown of Spain, although magnificently served in those days in America—witness the names of Columbus, Pizarro, Quesada and Cortés, Ojeda, Pedro de Alvarado, Almagro, Valdivia, with Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, and a whole galaxy of minor stars—was singularly unfortunate in its advisers in the mother country.

The Council of the Indies¹ that sat at Seville was generally composed of good, dull men, often humane enough, as is shown plainly in the Code, known as the Laws of the Indies, that they promulgated; but now and then ambitious and corrupt, after the style of Secretary Cobos and many others of the same bureaucratic breed.

Spain in those days, as England in more modern times, had an instinctive dread of brilliant men and of all those who showed originality.

Her dull administrators muddled along in times of peace, but, when a crisis called for initiative, they left her in the lurch. The conquest of the Indies was so great and notable an adventure that it produced extraordinary men, who dared and ventured the

¹ El Concejo de las Indias.

impossible. In the main, although they usually went out in search of gold, they were not infrequently lifted into a higher plane by the vast possibilities they saw unfold themselves before their eyes.

That they were often cruel is but to say that they were conquerors, and, after all, a conqueror, to whatsoever nationality he may belong, is but a man who dispossesses and enslaves the men he conquers.

In these days, though religious fervour has greatly spent itself, but yet so many men are given over to the basest superstitions and a belief in necromancy, mental and physical alike, it is difficult for us to understand how strongly the conquistadores of America believed the Catholic faith. They were the sons of men who had emerged victoriously from more than seven hundred years of warfare with the Moors. Christian¹ to them meant Catholic, and their Catholicism was a national as well as a religious faith. Those who were not good Catholics, as Moors and Lutherans, were enemies of Spain.

Added to this, the Spaniards believed themselves, just as we do to-day, to be a chosen people, having a mission to spread the truth, and to bring light into the darkest places of the earth. They had, as they thought, and as we believe to-day, a civilizing mission, and when a nation is convinced of its own fitness to regulate the lives of other people, it sticks at nothing to enforce the truth as it conceives it, all for God's glory and for the benefit of those it conquers and enslaves.

This was the faith the Romans held in its entirety, and they have passed it on to all the nations whom they influenced both by their customs and their laws.

Such peoples as the Romans did not come in contact with, held the same faith as they did, obtaining it by

¹ Hablar Cristiano, used to mean, to speak Spanish.

natural grace, for which they did not need a special revelation, for hitherto the victory has always been the guerdon of the strong.

Although the first attempts at exploration and at settlement had ended so disastrously in the River Plate, the name itself kept men's attention riveted upon it, nor was this wonderful after the conquests of Peru and Mexico.

Gaboto was the man that, both by his experience and his proved capacity, a prudent sovereign naturally would have selected to go out to the River Plate and found a colony. Perhaps the friends of the three hidalgos whom he had marooned had influence at court, but it is still more probable that, as he was a foreigner, the Council of the Indies advised the court against appointing him.

Again, the habit or the policy of Charles V. of treating everyone who served him in a mean, ungenerous manner may have been at the root of the neglect Gaboto suffered.

His services, his great experience both as a navigator and a leader, and the policy laid down by him to his unlucky officer, Nuño de Lara, at the fort of Santi Espiritu, all prove he was a man to whom the fortunes of a new colony might have been committed safely.

Nothing¹ was done for two long years, and if some straggling followers of Gaboto or Solis were still alive, they were detained as prisoners by the Indians.

The brief irruption of the white and bearded warriors, with their superior arms and great high-castled ships, must have seemed like a dream to the

¹ "Desde que Gaboto bolvio del Rio de Solis, que llaman de la Plata no se havia mandado a nadie que poblase aquellas grandes provincias" (Herrera, Decada V., lib. iv., p. 219).

"Historia General de los Hechos de los Castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Oceano" (Herrera. Madrid, 1739).

most part of the wild tribes who had but seen them as they sailed by, upon the Uruguay or Parana.

Only the chief, Seripo, really knew anything about them, and he must have preserved the image of the unfortunate Lucia and her brave husband to his last hour, barbarian as he was.

The wars in Europe, sanguinary and long drawn out, into which Charles V., as Emperor of Germany, had plunged Spain, had pretty well exhausted public funds. Already the lack of money that was to prove the ruin of the country was making itself felt.

Although the wealth of Mexico and of Peru poured like a golden stream towards Europe, it was to Antwerp that it came and not to Seville, for all the revenues were pledged to various great Antwerp houses, such as the Brothers Fugger and the like. Thus Charles had never money to assist any one of the conquistadores. The conquest of Pizarro, of Quesada and Cortés were private enterprises, and had resulted in great territories falling as it were from the skies to enrich the Spanish crown.

The only expedition that the sovereigns of Spain had helped with money and with ships was the first voyage of Columbus, and that by the entreaties of the Queen. Both Ferdinand the Catholic and the Emperor Charles V. were singularly mean in money matters for any object outside European wars. Imagination neither of them seems to have been possessed of, and as the conquests of the New World came to them without their own volition, and cost them not a single "maravedi,"¹ they valued them but little, except in so far as they furnished money to prosecute their European schemes.

¹ The maravedi was a copper coin of almost infinitesimal value, but it was used in all public accounts as the standard unit in the Spain of those days.

For all that, neither sovereign was oblivious of the welfare of the Indians, material and spiritual, and both enacted wise and careful legislation for their protection. Needless to say, in an age when communications were so difficult, at the vast distance South America was situated, they became inoperative.¹ Small wonder, therefore, that when a gentleman of good repute who had become enriched by his share of the sack of Rome came forward with an offer to equip an expedition and found a colony in the River Plate, the Emperor closed with it at once.

Don Pedro de Mendoza was born at Guadix, in Almeria, and was a soldier of repute, rich, and with strong connections at the court.

He was himself an officer of the Emperor's household.² Moreover, he was a near relation of Doña Maria de Mendoza, the wife of Don Francisco de los Cobos, Secretary to the Council of the Indies, a man of influence and capacity, although most shamelessly corrupt.

Through his position and his wealth and by the influence of Cobos, Don Pedro de Mendoza was enabled to conclude perhaps the most advantageous agreement with the Emperor, ever obtained by any of the conquerors.

The moment was propitious, for the Portuguese were pushing on their conquests in Brazil, and as Herrera says, it did not seem to the King that it was right to leave those provinces in such a state; nor did the Spanish court appear to have forgotten them, in spite of its neglect.

Mendoza's offer to pay all the expenses out of his

¹ It was common in the South American colonies, in reference to the great Code, the Laws of the Indies, for Viceroys and others in authority to say, "I obey but do not comply."

² "Gentil Hombre de Camera" was the office that he held.

own purse probably weighed strongly with the parsimonious Emperor. The agreement entered into between the sovereign and his vassal gave Don Pedro the title of Adelantado¹ of all the provinces² that were washed by the waters of the River Plate, and for two hundred leagues stretching towards the Straits of Magellan, with all the islands on the coast. Moreover, the much coveted title of marquess that had been granted to Pizarro and Cortés, and promised but not given to Quesada, was to be his as soon as he was well established in his colony. Mendoza bound himself in the first place to search for a communication with the South Seas. This was the *ignis fatuus* of the Spanish court. All expeditions were charged to find this passage out, nor did the fact that the Straits of Magellan were already known and had been navigated do anything to dissipate the dream.

All the conquistadores seem to have accepted the absurd condition, probably in the spirit of obeying but without complying, and then forgotten it.

Don Pedro bound himself to take on board his fleet one hundred horses and one hundred mares, little knowing at the time how marvellously the River Plate was suited to the equine race, or how in such a relatively short space of time the descendants of the horses he took out, would almost own the land.

He also bound himself to take out eight "religious."³

A strict proviso in the agreement bound him to treat the Indians⁴ well and to endeavour to establish

¹ Adelantado may be translated Governor-General.

² "Todos las provincias que baña el río, y docientas leguas hacia el estrecho de Magallanes" (Dean Funes, cap. iii., p. 25).

³ "Ocho religiosos." As it is not specially recorded what kind of "religious" they were, they most likely were friars, for the word "religioso" is generally used in reference to a "friar" in Spanish.

⁴ "Sacóse ansimismo por condicion que llevase ocho (8) religiosos para la conversion de los Indios: la qual sobre todas las cosas, el Rey le

Christianity amongst them. He also had to take out with him a doctor, with an apothecary and a surgeon, for the care of the sick.

Whatever was the practice of the conquistadores, and there were good and bad amongst them, as there are in every class of men, the recurrence of this clause in every agreement entered into between the various conquerors and the Spanish court effectually disposes of the calumny that the Spaniards as a race were impelled to their conquests but by a base desire for gold.

Furthermore, Don Pedro pledged himself to build three fortresses for the protection of the colony.

To indemnify him for what he should expend he was to be allowed two thousand ducats for his lifetime, to be paid out of the royal fifth.¹ In addition to this sum, he was to have another two thousand ducats from the crown.

He was to be hereditary Governor of any of the three fortresses he might select, and to enjoy the post of Alguacil² Mayor (Chief Magistrate) of the town that he should found.

Lastly, he was to take out a minimum of one thousand men. Mendoza being rich, a favourite

encargaba y ponía en conciencia el cuidado particular que en ella había de tener, juntamente con el *buen tratamiento* de los Indios, que era la cosa que mas el rey estimaba y tenía en su corazón y que también llevase Medico y Boticario y Cirujano para los enfermos" (Herrera, "Historia General," Decada V., lib. iv.).

¹ It was usual for the fifth part of the rent of the territories or of the treasure amassed by conquest to be reserved for the crown. Quesada, Cortés and Pizarro, and all the principal conquistadores were punctilious in regard to the royal fifth, and Quesada even prides himself in his Will on his strict regard as to rendering to Cæsar what was his due.

² "... se le daban la tenencia de Alcaide Perpetuo, y la Vara, de Alguacil Mayor de la Poblacion adonde residiese" (Herrera, Decada V., lib. iv., p. 217).

of the Emperor and a friend of Secretary Cobos, he did not meet with the delays in the equipment of his expedition that most of the conquistadores had to face. Nobles and gentlemen flocked to Seville begging to serve beneath his standard, for his was accounted the best-equipped expedition that had set out from Spain. So great was the desire to join the expedition that to avoid giving offence to many gentlemen and nobles who wished to accompany him, Mendoza accelerated his start several days, a most unusual thing in Spain, and quite against the rendering of the familiar saying,¹ "Things in a palace generally move slow." On the day of St. Bartholomew² of the year 1554 the expedition sailed from the port of San Lucar de Barrameda, at the mouth of the Guadalquivir, in fourteen ships, well found and well equipped.

They passed the bar, saluting as they went the low flat castles at the harbour mouth, breaking the standard of Castille on all the ships, and thundering their salvoes out in the clear air of Andalucia, that few of them were destined ever to breathe again. No doubt Don Pedro in his cuirass, high boots and bright steel morion crowned with feathers, his rapier riding on his thigh, closely cropped beard and curled moustache, as was the fashion of the time, stood on the poop to watch the hills of Spain sink slowly out of sight, as the wind filled his sails, and the Chief Pilot set his course to the New World.

No more brilliant expedition had ever left the coast of Spain for the Indies, and certainly none in which the Emperor had taken so much interest. Pizarro and Cortés were unknown to him personally until they had achieved success. Quesada most unluckily never was a *persona grata* at the court.

Don Pedro de Mendoza was a member of the

¹ "Cosas de palacio, van despacio."

² August 14th.

Emperor's own household, and with the fatuity of kings and emperors—a fatuity that has descended equally to presidents—Charles no doubt thought that a man known to him, and one moreover who had served in Italy, in those days the great theatre of war, must of necessity do well where mere adventurers, such as were Pizarro and Cortés, had already done so much.

If lineage, wealth, gallant equipment and pride of family were titles to success, Don Pedro de Mendoza held a full hand of trumps.

With him went as his treasurer Juan de Caceres, and his brother Felipe as paymaster for his Majesty.¹ Roderigo de Villalobos was his overseer, and Carlos de Guinea² held the post of chief commissioner. For assistant treasurer he had Garcia Venegas.³

A long list of illustrious names were on his roll-call. Francisco de Mendoza had been Mayordomo to Maximilian, King of the Romans, and Perafan de Rivera, Juan de Manrique, Diego de Abreu and Andres Hernandez, Carlos Dubrin,⁴ who had been foster-brother to the Emperor, Diego de Estopiñan, and Bernardo Centurion, who had been commander⁵ of a squadron of galleys under Andrea Doria. Lastly, Luis Perez de Ahumada, who was a brother of Santa Teresa, though at the time she was but a simple nun in Avila, and quite unknown to fame.

¹ Contador de su Majestad.

These brothers Caceres were the great enemies of the good viceroy Alvar Nuñez Cabeça de Vaca.

They were able men, but ambitious, tyrannical, and corrupt.

² The names of their offices were respectively "Veedor" and "Factor."

³ This man also was a bitter enemy of Alvar Nuñez. Rui Diaz de Guzman says in "La Argentina," p. 38, "Fué de los enemigos de Nuñez."

⁴ This gentleman was nicknamed "el romo," "flatface."

⁵ His title was "cuatralbo," for his squadron was composed of four galleys.

The expedition numbered two thousand five hundred Spaniards, and one hundred and fifty German, Flemish and Saxon subjects of the Emperor.¹

Many of the chief personages took their wives and families, as they believed that they were going to a country rich in silver mines, so greatly had the name of El Rio de la Plata possessed all minds in Spain.

The fates seemed to smile upon the expedition, and when they set out from San Lucar the only circumstance that seemed unpropitious was the bad state of the commander's health.

Don Pedro in his campaigns in Italy had contracted the fell malady that since his time has laid so many soldiers by the heels. The Spanish chroniclers of those days, as did our Elizabethan dramatists, were wont ungallantly to lay it to the charge of France;² but be that as it may, France has not kept it only for home use.

The state³ of the commander's health naturally threw a gloom upon the expedition, for although of a jealous disposition, Don Pedro was obliged from the first to delegate much of his authority. His choice of a lieutenant fell upon Don Juan Osorio, an officer who was extremely popular with all the fleet, and of high character.

The only record of Don Pedro's voyage is preserved in the writings of Hulderico Schmidel, who, though uneducated, was a keen observer and a shrewd critic of his officers.

¹ "Dos mil y quinientos españoles, y ciento cincuenta Alemanes, Flamencos y Sajones" ("Historia y Descubrimiento de el Rio de la Plata," cap. i., Hulderico Schmidel).

² With the plainness of Latin speech, that loves to call a spade a spade, and sees no harm in true nomenclature, the chronicles called the disease "El morbo galico," not thinking that its ravages could be stayed by softening its name.

³ Hulderico Schmidel says: "Don Pedro era continuamente enfermo encogido de nervios y muy debil."

At Palma, in the Canaries, a cousin of Don Pedro's, one Jorge de Mendoza, fell in love with a daughter of a citizen of the island, and took her to his ship. This very nearly brought about a general attack upon the fleet, that Don Pedro only averted by a prompt restitution of the girl. From Palma they set sail towards Brazil and arrived safely at Rio de Janeiro, passing, as Schmidel says, the Cape de Verdes¹ or the Hesperides, upon their way.

At Rio de Janeiro the first tragedy of an expedition fated to end so tragically took place. Hardly had Don Pedro named Osorio as his lieutenant than he appears to have grown jealous of him.

At Rio, Osorio was accused of treason, and, without trial or enquiry, Don Pedro ordered four of his captains² to make away with him.

This they at once performed, setting upon him on the beach and stabbing him to death.³

His death nearly produced a mutiny, for Osorio was beloved by everybody.

The whole affair is wrapped in mystery, for there appears to have been no sign of treason in Osorio's conduct, or complaint against him.

Schmidel records an adverse judgment on Don Pedro, for he says, "In which matter he acted without just motive, for Osorio was a good man and upright, a stout soldier, careful, liberal to all, and very considerate to his comrades."⁴

On leaving Rio de Janeiro the fleet had separated, and Don Diego de Mendoza, Don Pedro's brother,

¹ Las Islas Verdes ó Hesperides.

² Juan de Ayolas, Juan Salazar, Jorge Luxán (Schmidel calls him Luchsán), and Salvochea.

³ "Cosiendole a puñaladas" (*i.e.*, stitching him with dagger thrusts).

⁴ "En lo cual se procedio sin motivo justo, porque Osorio era bueno integro, fuerte soldado, oficioso, liberal, y muy apacible con sus compañeros" (Hulderico Schmidel).

had anchored on the north bank of the River Plate, at the islands of San Gabriel. When the news reached him of the murder of Osorio he was much shocked, and is reported to have said, "God grant that the ruin of us all may not be the just price of Osorio's death."¹

It is a curious coincidence that both Ayolas and Luxán were killed by the Indians. Salazar lost all his property, and was sent a prisoner to Spain in after years. The superstitious saw in their fate a punishment sent from above to avenge the unjust execution of Osorio.

Don Pedro and Don Diego de Mendoza, when they had met and joined their fleets, coasted along the south bank of the River Plate until they reached a spot that seemed a favourable place to disembark and found a settlement.

The fleet was in a miserable state; the provisions were beginning to run short, and the soldiers all were suffering from the confinement of the voyage. The horses, on which so much depended in all the conquests that the Spaniards undertook in South America, were all in bad condition, thin and spiritless.

The vessels anchored under a high bank, some few miles lower down the river than where the actual city stands. Early in 1536 they disembarked their horses and the men.

The first man who set foot upon the promised land was Sancho del Campo, the brother-in-law of Pedro de Mendoza. When he felt, first of Europeans, the fresh air that blows across the plains and comes up from the Patagonian Pampa fresh and invigorating, he called out, "How good the air is of this country."²

From the chance exclamation of a man, sick of the stench and misery of the ships, arose the name that has remained from the first building of the wretched

¹ Dean Funes, cap. iii., p. 28.

² "Que buenos aires son los de este suelo" ("La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman, p. 36).

huts, until to-day, when marble seems almost too poor a stone for its great palaces.

The first thing was to get the precious horses off the ships, for the Spaniards knew they would require them, and they were all in bad condition with the voyage.

When they had got them all ashore, Don Pedro disembarked his men, and at once set them to work to entrench a camp and set up huts for shelter before the winter took them unprepared.

Like Rome, the city of the palaces grew from a camp and a few wattled huts.

The very brilliancy of the expedition served the first conquerors badly,¹ for the only trade most of the knights and nobles who accompanied Don Pedro knew was war, and though they had to fight for mere existence almost immediately, there seems to have been none of them who had forethought enough to sow a crop for their necessity.

Neither did they set to work to strengthen their position, or to build houses suitable to withstand the southern winter, as they should have done.

When all had come ashore, and the ships were safely anchored as they thought, for they knew nothing of the furious southern gales known as Pamperos in the River Plate, they hastily set up a fort.

Rui Diaz de Guzman² calls it a fort, but from his

¹ " . . . De ver era salir en aquel llano
Al soldado birarro y cavallero
De sedas y bçocados muy galanes
A guisa e parecer de Perulero
Salir con contento muy ufano
Y hasta el pobrecito marinero
Desque la bella tierra contemplaba
A España no bolver jamas juraba."

("La Argentina," Barco de la Centenera, Canto iv., p. 13.)

A bitter deception awaited these brilliant knights and soldiers.

² " . . . Hizo un fuerte de tapias, de poca monta un solar en cuadro donde se pudiese recoger la gente y defenderse de los Indios " ("La Argentina," p. 37).

description it seems to have been a miserable place, a mud-built fort in which the colonists could retire for shelter from the Indians' attacks, a straggling line of trenches, and in the middle of them mud huts hastily run up for the rank and file, and a small building of stone for the commander.

This was the first of the three forts that Don Pedro was to take his choice of, in the capitulation entered into with the Emperor, for his perpetual governorship.

The miserable settlement they named after the Holy Trinity, and to the port they gave the name of Santa Maria de Buenos Aires, that it has retained and glorified. Hardly had the expedition got ashore and the first rudiments of a settlement begun, than troubles showed themselves. Close to their newly founded fort there was a large and powerful camp of Indians. These Indians belonged to the great group of tribes that in those days spread over the whole of what is now the province of Buenos Aires, down to Patagonia.

This tribe, the Querandis, were allied to the Moluches and Tehuelches of the southern plains, and perhaps to the Araucanians¹ of the Chilean Andes, an indomitable race.

They were, indeed, a different people from the Peruvians or the Mexicans. A wandering horde without a fixed abode, they camped like gypsies² on the vast southern Pampas, and moved on when they had exhausted all the game, or gathered a rude crop.

They owed but slight obedience to their chiefs

¹ Father Faulkner, "A Description of Patagonia," Hereford, 1774, lib. x., 12, says that the Araucanians never referred to themselves under that name, but called themselves either Moluches or Pehuelches — *i.e.*, "warriors." "Auca" = wild, as in the composite word "Auca-Cahual," a wild horse. He supposes Araucanians to be a corruption from "Auca."

² "Estos Curandies (Querandis) no tienen morada fija, vagan por la Tierra como Gitanos" (Hulderico Schmidel).

except in war-time, and in their habits, their fierceness and intractability, much more resembled the Red Indians of the north than any of the tribes that the Spaniards had encountered in the south.

There were about three thousand Querandis encamped¹ under a chief who at the first received the Spaniards kindly and furnished them with food in exchange for European marvels, such as looking-glasses, beads, and small brass hawk-bells. Tiring of this, either because the looking-glasses did not reflect their faces as they hoped to see them, or because, having no hawks, the bells were useless to them, the Indians one night silently withdrew and fixed their camp about four leagues away. This was a mortal blow, for the provisions brought from Spain were almost finished, and starvation stared the expedition in the face if food was not to be procured from the recalcitrant Querandis. Don Pedro tried by flattering messages and promises of still more wondrous European gifts to soften the chief's heart. All was in vain, and all his messengers returned without a word of comfort, and the provisions from the ships were almost at an end.

At last, despairing of success by the way of persuasion, he sent an emissary to the chief to reason with him.

This man, who was accompanied by a few soldiers, thinking that it was not befitting to reason with the chief, threatened to punish him if he did not comply. Nothing could have been more ill-advised. The Indians, at the first imperious commands the foolish commissary addressed to them, instantly flew to arms. The commissary and his men were chased back to the fort, with the loss of ten men. The Indians then attacked the camp; but a sharp fire from crossbows

¹ "Cerca de 3,000 Curandies" (Hulderico Schmidel).

and from arquebuses drove them back in confusion to a position they had taken up nine or ten miles away.

The die was cast, for from that moment down to the year 1882¹ warfare raged off and on between the Indians and the settlers on the plains.

Don Pedro de Mendoza, not being able to endure such insolence, as a chronicler observes, determined

¹ It was only in 1882 that the power of the Pampa Indians was finally broken, and they themselves either all slaughtered or driven into the Andes. Before that time, the ever-shifting frontier was protected by a line of mud forts, each with its little cannon on the roof and with a garrison of about twenty men. The forts were surrounded by a deep ditch, which was seldom cleaned out; but as the Indians had no firearms and never got off their horses, it was a sufficient protection.

The lives of the men in the forts were monotonous and hazardous in the extreme. Months might pass without a sign of the Indians, and the soldiers have nothing to do but attend to their horses, break wild colts, run races, and occasionally go out ostrich-hunting. Their food was meat, and their drink maté, but in spite of that, or perhaps because of it, they were a hard, wiry and athletic race of men.

One morning a scout would come in and report he had seen the deer and ostriches, with which all the "camp" was then well stocked, alarmed and in motion. Then another scout with news that the herds of mares and cattle were on the move. Lastly, on the horizon they would see a cloud of dust. As it drew near, bands of frightened animals mixed up with deer and ostriches would thunder past the fort.

Then through the dust the lance-heads of the Indians, chiefly made from old shears shrunk on to a cane full twenty feet in length with a piece of green hide, would flash like tongues of fire, and in a thundering of hoofs the Indians would emerge from out the cloud. They carried their long lances, bolas, and a knife, and each man led a horse beside him, trained to lead in the fashion that the Gauchos called "a la par"—that is, in step and head to head with the horse ridden by the Indian.

They rode in a wide semicircle, naked but for a loin-cloth and a skin mantle that fluttered in the wind. As they swept on they raised their war-cry, shrill and terrifying, at intervals striking their right hands on their mouths. The forts they generally gave a wide berth to, leaving them like islands in their tempestuous surge across the plains. They slaughtered everyone they met, and gathering up the cattle and mares into vast herds drove them before them to their desert fastnesses. Such was an Indian "Malón."

to chastise the Indians and make them feel his power. He sent out, therefore, three hundred infantry and thirty cavalry. Amongst the latter, Schmidel¹ says with pride, "I went." To do him justice, he was always in the van, and never shrank throughout his twenty years of service in the River Plate from any enterprise, however desperate.

The expedition slowly climbed the bluff, the horses weak and shipworn, but, one would imagine, gradually coming back into condition with the fresh Pampa air and the abundance of sweet grass that was to make the new-found country the Eden of their race. Don Diego de Mendoza, the brother of the Governor, was in command, and with him went several brave captains who had proved themselves in the Italian wars, as Bartolome de Bracamonte, Juan Manrique, Perafan de Rivera, Diego Luxán, and others never destined to return.

As they emerged upon the plain, for the first time the southern Pampa must have burst on European eyes.

No one in those days could have imagined anything of a like nature to it. The plains of Hungary and Spain were but mere garden plots compared to the vast sea of green that the astonished Spaniards now beheld. Few, indeed, of them could have seen the Central Asian steppes, and even they, with their hard wiry grass and cruel climate, gave no idea of the vast savannah, which the grass, moved by the wind, broke into rolling waves and seemed a sea. No cattle and no horses fed upon it, although in ages past the small eight-footed horse roamed over it in thousands, leaving his bones in many a cave and bluff upon the river's banks.

¹ " . . . y 30 buenos caballos, entre los cuales iba yo " (Hulderico Schmidel, cap. vii., p. 4).

Instead, great bands of ostriches and packs of deer were the sole occupants that stood out against the sky. Vizcachas sat at their holes or played about the mounds above their burrows, with little owls looking portentously wise, posted as sentinels. In all the streams, carpinchos¹ sat upon the banks, ready to plunge into the water at the first alarm, and nutrias swam with their round heads above the water and their backs awash, whilst tortoises sat sunning on the sand. The rivers were alive with fish, the bagre, dorado, and pati, pacú, and surubi, with half a hundred more unknown to European streams. Here and there great marshes, fringed with Pampas-grass and willows, were alive with birds. Black-headed Magellanic swans sailed like little argosies upon their waters, or, collecting into packs, flew southward in a wedge, with their harsh cry gradually getting fainter till it melted in the air.

Flocks of flamingoes, pink and pearly grey, stood bunched upon the spits of sand that jutted into the lagunas, poised on their stilt-like legs, fishing contemplatively. When they took wing the sun seemed to turn rose-colour as they flew up into his rays. The air was full of birds, birds and more birds, for the south Pampa was their paradise, as was the garden on the Tigris the paradise of man.

Viuditas, cardinales, scissor-birds, with tinamous, the bien-te-veo, and the chajá with spurs upon its wings, a better watch than a whole pack of dogs, as the Gauchos had it, with humming-birds suspended on their whirring wings at every flower—all raised their psalmody. Under the ground the tuco-tuco's² call responded to the sharp crying of the teru-tero wheeling overhead.

¹ Capibaras.

² The tuco-tuco is a kind of mole. The teru-tero is a plover.

From the rare thorny trees upon the river's bank hung nests of oven-birds, confectioned out of mud, and on their branches sprouted that strange plant *La Flor del Aire*, that seems to have no root. Flights of green parrakeets flew about shrieking, as they fed on the berries of the *Arasá* or of the *Espinillo de Olor*.

A constant hum of insects sounded in the air. All was untouched since the creation of the earth, and so Edenic that the armadillos¹ did not look prediluvian as they do to-day in their changed circumstances.

No one was there to bring destruction² to the inhabitants of that idyllic world.

The keen south wind that usually prevailed had something sparkling and exhilarating in it, and amply justified the dictum of the soldier who first stepped ashore, "How good the airs are of this country," when all the Pampa stretched out, virgin and undefiled, just as it came from the Creator's hand, a waste of grass and sky.³

Probably, little enough the raiding party looked at the beauty of the scene. It is more likely that their thoughts ran upon the impending skirmish, for as they marched along they soon descried a band of Indians waiting for them.

Between the two opposing forces ran a stream, known since the battle as *El Arroyo de Luxán*.⁴ Like nearly all the streams upon the Pampa it was very muddy, and there was a deep descent with a corresponding rise upon the other side.

¹ The varieties most common in the Pampa were the *Peludo* and the *Mulita*, and further south the *Quiriquincho*.

² The Indians only hunted when pushed by hunger, after the fashion of the great carnivoræ. Snobbism and a cruel lust for blood for its own sake, only came in with the advance of civilization and the spread of sanitary appliances, and arms of precision.

³ The *Gauchos* used to refer to the landscape as "*Paja y Cielo*."

⁴ In modern spelling "*Lujan*."

The Admiral Don Diego de Mendoza, without waiting for the cavalry that had lagged behind, to arrive and back them up, immediately began to cross the stream, confident in his superior arms and discipline.

The Indians, with the instinctive eye for a situation inherent in their race, allowed a few to cross and fell upon the rest as they were struggling in the mud. Herrera says the Querandis were swift of foot¹ and valiant, and, in addition to their clubs and spears, employed a weapon that, had the country all been as open and as flat as was the Pampa, might have neutralized the effect of the much dreaded horses, that in all other conquests only had to appear and ride the Indians down. This weapon was the "Bolas,"² that for the first time, in the fight on the Luxán, became known to the world.

They were, indeed, a formidable weapon against horses so thin³ and miserable that they could hardly move out of a walk.

Don Bartolome de Bracamonte and Perafan de

¹ "Los Querandis ligeros y valientes" (Herrera, Decada V., lib. ix).

² "The Bolas" are always referred to as "Las Boleadoras," perhaps for euphony, throughout the River Plate. Herrera, Decada V., says: "Ataban los caballos con ciertos laços que usaban." From this allusion it is evident that Herrera had never seen the "Bolas."

Rui Diaz de Guzman, p. 38, says in describing the fight: "... hasta que con las bolas fuerron derribando algunos caballos." By this time the "Bolas" were a familiar object.

Hulderico Schmidel, who was present in the cavalry, has the best description: "... tienen unas Bolas de piedra atadas a un cordel ... hechanlas a los pies de los caballos e de los ciervos y con estas bolas mataban nuestro capitan."

³ "... los caballos venian flacos del mar y temian arrojarse a la pelea" ("La Argentina," p. 30).

Padre Del Techo says in his "Historia de la Provincia del Paraguay," p. 60: "Los caballos con la pasada navegacion estaban escualidos y flacos y habian perdido el uso del freno de modo que, alzando la cabeza y sin moverse dejaban los caballeros espuestos a las saetas."

Rivera rallied the infantry to give them time to let the cavalry come on the field, performing prodigies and fighting valiantly. The slaughter was immense on both sides, but the Indians, not encumbered with accoutrements, drove back the Spaniards into the muddy stream. There, huddled in a mass, they would have perished to the last man had not the mounted men come up and forced their horses into a half-hearted charge upon the enemy. Their leader, Don Juan Manrique, after killing many Indians with his lance, fell from his horse pierced by an Indian's spear.

Don Diego de Mendoza spurred up his horse, and as the Indian who had slain Manrique was cutting off his head, he laid him dead with such a furious lance thrust that it pinned him to the ground. As he withdrew his lance, he received a wound from what is known as a Bola Perdida—that is, a single stone fastened to a cord—that laid him dead beside his friend.

At last the Spaniards all got back across the stream, but with the loss of Bracamonte, Perafan de Rivera, and of Luxán, who, wounded and entangled with his horse, fell and was dragged to death.

Once they had crossed the stream and got on solid ground the Spaniards reformed their ranks and, fighting desperately, made a great slaughter of the Indians. When night came on, both parties drew apart and fell back upon their bases.

Of the three hundred Spanish infantry, eighty alone returned to the new settlement, and but five cavalry out of the thirty who set out from the camp. Both sides claimed the victory, and no doubt the slaughter of the Indians had been immense, but they at all events were in their own country and not short of food, whereas the Spaniards had exhausted their provisions and famine stared them in the face.

60 CONQUEST OF THE RIVER PLATE

In addition to all this, they had lost five and twenty horses, and in the conquest of the New World a horse was quite as valuable as were a hundred men.

Don Pedro de Mendoza, when he learned of the death of his brother Diego, so many cavaliers, stout soldiers, and the loss of the invaluable horses, ill as he was, knowing the situation to be well-nigh desperate, could not bear up against the blow and almost died of grief.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Don Pedro de Mendoza could rouse himself from the shock of the disastrous results¹ of his first expedition, and recover from his grief at the loss of his brother and so many of his men, he found the situation well-nigh desperate.

In spite of all the difficulties that beset him, and notwithstanding that he was so ill that he could hardly mount his horse, Don Pedro showed himself a man of energy, who might in better circumstances have carried his enterprise to a satisfactory end. The raiding party having failed to get provisions, famine was imminent.

Packed as the expedition was behind a low mud wall, disease as well as hunger soon made ravages amongst their ranks. The wall itself, not higher than a lance,² was quite inadequate as a defence, and

¹ Rui Diaz de Guzman ("La Argentina") says the victory remained with the Indians.

Father del Techo also says so ("Historia de la Provincia del Paraguay," por El P. Nicolas del Techo, Lieja, 1673, cap. i.).

Del Techo was a Belgian from Lille, whose name was Hispaniolized into Del Techo. He was a missionary in Paraguay, and wrote before the expulsion of the Jesuits.

Hulderico Schmidel (who was at the battle) says the Spaniards gained the day; as does Herrera.

Padre Lozano seems to incline to a middle opinion—*i.e.*, that both sides suffered severely ("Descripcion Chorografica del Gran Chaco, Gualamba," etc., por El P. Pedro Lozano de la Compania de Jesus en Cordoba, El Colegio de la Assumpcion por Joseph Santos Balbas, 1733).

² "De la altura de una lanza" (Hulderico Schmidel).

being built of mud without cement or straw, generally fell down when it rained.

The famine grew so rigorous that the miserable settlers greedily devoured rats, snakes, and all the dogs and cats that they had brought with them from Spain.

As often happens in such extremities, factions broke out amongst the wretched men, impelled by hunger to quarrel almost for a bone, and Captain Medrano was found stabbed to death in bed.

Two of the soldiers, desperate with hunger, killed a horse and were detected feasting on it.

This was the sin against the Holy Ghost, that none of the conquistadores ever pardoned, so the poor wretches paid for it with their lives.

There still remained a miserable remnant of the provisions in the ships, that was served out at the rate of an ounce¹ or two per man, and even this they had to supplement in any way they could, some being pushed to eat the bodies of the soldiers who had died. To make things still more desperate, the Querandis, seeing the miserable state the Spaniards were in, allied themselves with several neighbouring tribes—the Bertenes, Zechunas and Timbues—determining to hurl the invaders back into the sea.

On St. John the Baptist's Day, 1585, they made a general attack upon the miserable town. Built of

¹ “. . . sin embargo tragimos a Buenos Aires alguna poca que se nos repartian a onça y media de pan de racion” (Hulderico Schmidel).

Herrera (“Historia de las Indias,” Decada V., lib. iv.) says: “. . . seis onzas de Vizcocos por persona, con la qual, y con cardos y otros yervas se sustentaron.”

Herrera makes the rations better than Schmidel, but then Schmidel had to live off them, whereas Herrera wrote in his study in Spain.

Both agree as to the straits to which the expedition was reduced, for Herrera says: “Comian yervas, culebras, lagartos, ratones y otras sabandijas.”



INDIANS ATTACKING A FORT.

From Huddeneo Schmidt's Book.

huts made of mud and thatched with straw, it did not count a single house capable of defence, except the small stone building in which Don Pedro de Mendoza lay, sick almost to the death.

The Indians soon enveloped everything in flames by shooting bunches of arrows made of canes,¹ that, lighted at the points, fanned in their passage through the air to flame, fell on the roofs like firebrands, and set everything alight.

Discipline and the dour courage of the Spaniards, the most of whom had served in the Italian wars and were all seasoned men, now stood them in good stead. Seldom in all the annals of the conquest had a Spanish force been in more desperate straits.

A shift of wind and a home charge gave them the opportunity to beat back the Indians and to put out the flames.

They saved their mud-built town, but in the heat and the confusion of the fray a fleet of Indian canoes had stolen out silently and set on fire four of their largest ships, though they were anchored half a league away. The Indians had made a valiant effort to expel the invaders of their country. The Spaniards as usual had displayed that courage above proof, and stern tenacity that made the basis of their character throughout the conquest of the southern hemisphere.

The nature of the country, the want of food, the lack of officers experienced in Indian warfare, the condition of the horses that made them almost useless in the fight, and the appearance of the strange new weapon the Indians employed,² had certainly equalized the contest, and put the adversaries more upon a level than was the case in Mexico and in Peru.

¹ Usually the Indians tied burning straw to their arrows. Hulderico Schmidt describes this novel method very carefully.

² The Bolas.

In Mexico, the numbers of the Indians and the tenacity they showed in the defence of their great city by the lake had been great obstacles against the Spaniards' attack. Still food was plentiful in Mexico, and in Cortés they had a leader with a natural aptitude for war, far above that to which Don Pedro de Mendoza could pretend.

The Indians most undoubtedly had won the first point in the game; but in their very victory were laid the seeds of ultimate defeat.

Their country was too open for defence, their habits too nomadic for continued combination, whilst they had not, as had the Arabs of Arabia, either a desert into which they could retire, or a dogmatic, stern religion to serve them as a bulwark against aliens. Although the Pampa tribes remained for centuries never entirely subjugated, the Spanish settlers by degrees pushed out into the wilds, and Buenos Aires rose to a considerable town, quite unassailable by any force the Indians could raise.

Don Pedro de Mendoza was indeed in a miserable plight. The fields of Cupid and of Mars had both proved unpropitious to him, and the repeated strokes of evil fortune had almost brought him to the grave. Still he showed signs of energy, and seeing that the expedition was all doomed to perish unless provisions were obtained, first he reviewed his followers and found that out of two thousand five hundred who had sailed from Spain a year ago, only five hundred and sixty were alive.

The rest had perished either in battle or by disease, but most of all by hunger, so that it may be said of all the expeditions that set out from Spain to the Americas this was the most unfortunate.

Though the mortality had been so great amongst the men, luckily for the country the horses had not

suffered, and with the exception of those killed in the fight on the Luxán had thriven wonderfully.

Feeling his health grow daily worse, Don Pedro availed himself of the power given him in his capitulation with the Emperor, and named Juan de Ayolas Captain-General with all the powers he had enjoyed himself.

The appointment was judicious, for Ayolas was a man of worth, loved by the soldiers¹ and popular with all, in despite of the share he had in the death of Osorio.

Ayolas, judging that the country must be more fertile higher up the stream, at once constructed eight little vessels of light draught, and leaving one hundred and sixty men to guard the four large vessels that still remained intact, he set out on his voyage.

He left Captain Juan Romero in command at Buenos Aires, with rations for a year at the rate of a quarter of a pound of bread² a day, and if they wanted any more they had to find it for themselves.

Generals and judges often appear to be the possessors of a grim kind of humour, by whose exercise, perhaps, they indemnify themselves for the isolated state to which they are condemned.

Don Pedro accompanied Ayolas on his voyage upstream as far as Corpus Christi, where he had placed a little garrison. Misfortune still dogged his steps, for on the passage many of his soldiers died, and on arrival at the little fort he found that half the garrison was dead.

At Corpus Christi Don Pedro went ashore; but his lieutenant, General Juan de Ayolas, sailed up the

¹ Even Schmidel, usually so critical of all his officers, says nothing bad of him.

² "Con racion de un quarteron de pan para un año y si mas quisiesen, lo buscasen" (Hulderico Schmidel, cap. xii., p. 5).

river, battling with shoals and struggling against the current, without a chart or pilot, and probably finding a channel by sending on a boat¹ ahead to sound with a long cane.

Two months Ayolas struggled upwards, and they had only sailed a little over eighty leagues.

At that point he came on a little Indian town to which he gave the name of Buena Esperanza, and was well received and entertained by its inhabitants.

These Indians had canoes that Schmidel says were eighty feet in length, which they manœuvred² with oars made without iron, after the fashion of the fishermen of Germany.

Ayolas had received orders to return to Buenos Aires within forty days. As he did not come back at the appointed time, and as the situation in the newly-founded town was every day growing more difficult, Don Pedro determined to embark with half his men and sail to some Brazilian settlement and endeavour to find food. The very day that he intended to set sail, Ayolas came back from Buena Esperanza and anchored in the port.

He was received with great rejoicing and with salvoes of artillery,³ for he had brought a little food.

This made Don Pedro change his mind, and giving up his plan of sailing to Brazil, he set off up the river, with about half his men, for Corpus Christi, a little port that Captain Alvarado had constructed further up the stream. Don Pedro left Captain Francisco Ruiz in Buenos Aires as his lieutenant-general, with Captain Nuño de Silva as his chief officer.

¹ This method was still in use on the Parana and Paraguay fifty years ago, and possibly may still obtain to-day.

² " . . . y las navegan con remos (sin yerro) al modo de los pescadores de Alemania " (Hulderico Schmidel).

³ " Gran salva de artilleria, y gran jubilo " (" La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman, p. 29).

He made a Fleming, one Jacques de Ramaria,¹ commander of the fleet,² and then embarking with his men he started up the Parana to Corpus Christi to join Alvarado, the builder of the fort.

When he arrived at Corpus Christi, he found that Captain Alvarado and the greater portion of his men had died of a strange pestilence.

Finding provisions much more abundant in the Timbues country than amongst the Querandis, he built a house there for himself, and for a time things looked a little brighter, although his health continued bad.

Not far off from the fort there dwelt a tribe³ called Comchingones, who were troglodytes, the only instance in this conquest of any such a race.

Although Don Pedro was confined for the most part of the time to bed, his spirit was not broken, and he strove manfully to find a way out of his difficulties.

He despatched Juan de Ayolas and Domingo de Irala to sail up the river to search for better country and to report upon the tribes.

By dint of oars and towing⁴ they reached La Angostura, entered the Paraguay and fought a battle with the Agaces Indians, who came out to bar their way.

Ayolas, who was a man of prudence and of valour, followed the course taken before him by Gaboto up the River Paraguay.

After his battle with the Agaces he encountered no serious opposition till he reached Mount Lambaré, a hill not far from where now stands Asuncion.

¹ Ramaria does not seem a Flemish name, but the Spaniards were sad transformers of all foreign names.

² "Capitan de los navios" (Guzman, "La Argentina").

³ "Ciertos pueblos de Indios que viven bajo de tierra, que llaman Comchingones" ("La Argentina," p. 40).

⁴ "... a remos y a la sirga" ("La Argentina").

Here the two caciques of the Guaranis, Lambaré and Yanduazabi Rubichá, had built a fortress made of logs, and in a great fleet of canoes came out to challenge him.

Although their numbers are variously estimated from twenty thousand to forty thousand men, they must have been considerable, at any rate they outnumbered the little force Ayolas had at his command by at least ten to one.

The chroniclers say that their flights of arrows darkened the air, but at the first discharge of the artillery they all turned tail and fled, and shut themselves up in their fort. The Spaniards instantly attacked it, and on the third day of the siege the fort capitulated.

Ayolas, who knew that his position was precarious, having no chance of receiving reinforcements in the present miserable state of Buenos Aires, allowed the Indians easy terms and then concluded an alliance between the Spaniards and the Guaranis.

This was a masterstroke of policy, situated as he was, for the Guaranis, although not warlike, were the most numerous of all the Indian tribes upon the Paraguay.

Schmidel, who, of course, was in the expedition, says the Indians at the signing of the treaty brought as a peace-offering to Ayolas seven young Indian girls, the eldest not more than eighteen years of age, and six head of deer. To every soldier they sent two Indian maidens. "In this manner,"¹ he says "we became friends."

Thus almost from the first ensued that mingling of the two races that made the future conquest easy,

¹ " . . . siete Indias la mayor de 18 años y seis ciervos . . . a los soldados dieron a dos Indias para que los serviesen . . . y de este modo quedamos amigos " (Hulderico Schmidel, cap. xxi., p. 8).

and paved the way for many of the misfortunes that later on fell to the lot of Paraguay.¹

Near Lambaré, upon the day of the Assumption in the year 1539, the Spaniards founded Asuncion.

Whilst Ayolas was pushing on into the interior,² Don Pedro de Mendoza had become desperate, and once again determined to return to Spain. So sailing down the river he reached Buenos Aires, and found both pestilence and famine raging in the miserable town. Don Pedro's situation now was terrible. Without provisions, and scarcely strength to hold his own against the perpetual incursions of the Querandis, all he could think of was to return home at once to seek for reinforcements. Ruined in health and fortune, for he had expended forty thousand ducats on his ill-fated expedition, he still had credit with the Emperor. Just as he was sailing Captain Gonzalo de Mendoza arrived with two ships laden with provisions that he had purchased in Brazil. His arrival was too late to alter the determination Don Pedro had arrived at, and he set sail for Spain.

Ill luck pursued him to the end. The voyage was stormy and provisions short; the wretched man, racked by disease and scarcely able to move hand or foot, died on the passage, in a tempestuous night. A miserable ending to a life that had dawned prosperously,

¹ Many of the Paraguayan families kept their blood pure, but the bulk of the population became half-breeds, an easy-going superstitious people, much under the dominion of their priests and grossly ignorant. In the beginning of the nineteenth century they fell under the rule of the tyrant Dr. Francia, who shut the country off completely from the outside world, reducing all the Paraguayans to mere slaves.

After his death they fell into the hands of President Carlos Antonio Lopez, an ignorant, but not especially cruel man. His son, Francisco Solano Lopez, completed the ruin of his country by plunging it into war with the Empire of Brazil, the Argentine Republic, and the Republic of Uruguay.

² Tierra adentro.

and at the end had been a long chain of misfortunes and of miseries. His death must have come to him as a release from all his difficulties, and from the sufferings that on the whole he bore heroically.

Most of the historians of the Conquest of the River Plate write harshly of Don Pedro de Mendoza. Schmidel, who alone of all of them knew him personally, only says that he was ill. He blames him for the slaughter of Osorio, but does not say, as do the other chroniclers, that the misfortunes that beset Don Pedro to his last hour were merely judgments from on high. He takes the sensible Teutonic view, that the execution of Osorio was both unjust and unmerited, and that by it Don Pedro lost not only a good officer, but a captain extremely popular with all his followers.

One thing is sure, that Don Pedro never slackened in his zeal for his new colony in spite of all his sufferings, or ever spared himself.

His last thoughts evidently were with the unlucky city he had founded, scourged as it was with famine and with pestilence. One of the clauses in his will, written most probably at sea on his last voyage, calls on the Spanish Government¹ "to send out provisions, more men, and all things necessary."

For once the government rose to the occasion, and despatched two vessels, under a certain Captain Alfonso Cabrera, who brought provisions for two years and a detachment of two hundred men.

Thus with his last breath Don Pedro de Mendoza was still striving, ever contriving to bring succour to the city in which he underwent the utmost strokes that fortune has at her command.

In this he showed the spirit of the rest of the conquistadores, and though the ultimate foundation

¹ Hulderico Schmidel.

of the city was reserved for another hand, he was the first¹ to gaze out on the illimitable sea of grass that with its first waves kisses the left bank of the River Plate and extends down to Cholechél.

¹ From the five horses and the seven mares that he abandoned sprang the great herds that in two generations spread from where now stands the watering-place of Mar del Plata, to where the Andes rise like a buttress from the plain.

CHAPTER IV

AYOLAS, after having sent back to Spain a description of the River Paraguay and of the Indians upon its banks, disembarked Domingo de Irala with a hundred men at Lambaré,¹ and with the remainder of his men sailed up the river, passing many Indian tribes, amongst them Los Carios, who cultivated maize,² owned goats, chickens, and Indian sheep³ as large as mules. These Indian sheep were evidently Llamas, that the Carios must have procured from Peru.

Irala was to remain for six months, and if by that time he had no news of Ayolas to return to Buenos Aires to report himself. Ayolas did not know that Don Pedro de Mendoza had set out for Spain, and still less of his death.

¹ Asuncion.

² Schmidel says they also cultivated "Padades," which was evidently the way he pronounced the Spanish word "patatas."

³ "Ovejas Indianas tan grandes como mulos" (Schmidel, cap. xx., p. 7).

For a wonder Schmidel did not accompany Ayolas on his exploring expedition up the river, but remained with Irala at Asuncion.

He describes many of the tribes, giving them strange Germanized names, as the Uneiburgos and the Parianbos.

It is almost impossible to identify these. Some have supposed that the Parianbos were the Payaguas. He also says he went to a place called Monte Fernando, eighty leagues above Asuncion. It was very like Boganberg (cap. xiv., p. 9).

It may have been some place he remembered in Germany. At this Boganberg they got news of some Indians further up the country "tan sabios como los Christianos."

These were probably the Peruvians, who were at least as wise as Christians, for Christians, though wise enough, frequently do not display their wisdom to the best advantage.

In Buenos Aires things went from bad to worse, and though its colonists were saved from actual starvation by the provisions Captain Gonzalo de Mendoza had brought from Brazil, bad government and pestilence brought them to a desperate pass.

Gonzalo de Mendoza had brought from Santa Catalina, in Brazil, the men who had accompanied Gaboto and remained behind when he returned to Spain. These were all seasoned Indian fighters, and were known as "Baqueanos"¹—that is, pioneers.

Mendoza also brought some Brazilian Indians, who had their women² and their children with them.

Those and Gaboto's men were all well armed, and became subsequently of the greatest service in the colony. Gonzalo de Mendoza and Captain Salazar sailed up to Asuncion and found Irala still waiting for Ayolas, but without news of him.

Salazar returned to Buenos Aires just as the colony was almost in revolt against the Governor whom Don Pedro de Mendoza had appointed before he had set out for Spain. This Governor was one Ruiz de Galan, a cruel tyrant, whose severity had made him hated both by the soldiers and the colonists.

In addition to this, pestilence raged, the Querandis attacked continually, and the town was scourged with a plague of tigers,³ ounces and lions that killed every-

¹ Baqueano originally meant a guide. In process of time it was used in the sense of pioneer, and ultimately was applied to everyone who knew the country well. It is still in use in the Argentine Republic, and is usually applied to a man who knows the roads in a district.

² "Baqueanos y practicos en la tierra, tenian consigo algunos Indios del Brasil, y lo mas de ellos con sus amigas y hijos" ("La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman).

³ "Una furiosa plaga de tigres, onzas y leones que los mataban y comian en saliendo del fuerte, y los hacian pedazos de tal manera, que para salir a hacer sus necesidades, era necesario que saliese numero de gente para resguardo de los que salian a ellas" ("La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman).

one who ventured from the fort alone, so that the colonists had to go out in bands.

Where such a band of animals could have come from is a mystery. The lions, of course, were pumas, and the tigers, jaguars.

The ounces may have been wild cats, and possibly the continual state of warfare that had raged since the first coming of the Spaniards may have emboldened them.

Famine and war and the plague of tigers had reduced Buenos Aires to such a state that when Gonzalo de Mendoza returned from Asuncion with a favourable account of Paraguay, Ruiz de Galan determined to abandon it and remove all the colonists to Asuncion. It was high time; provisions again were running short, and the attacks of Indians so frequent that he ordered that anyone who left the fort without his orders should be executed.

Several poor wretches who had stolen out to search for food, pushed by the extremity of famine, were seized on their return and hanged. Never before even in the unlucky town had famine been so terrible. Fully more than half the population were already dead of hunger. Those who remained greedily devoured toads, snakes, and any carrion that they could find. Some even fed upon the bodies of the dead.

In the midst of this dreadful misery, a Spanish woman, by name Maldonada, being unable to withstand the pangs of hunger, in despite of the cruel order of Galan, stole out one night, being determined to throw herself upon the mercy of the Indians, rather than suffer any more.

Following the river bank upstream, she reached a point called Punta Gorda in El Monte Grande, and as it grew late, searched for some place in which to pass the night.

She entered a cave hollowed out in the river bank, and found herself face to face with a lioness.

This animal was in the agony¹ of giving birth.

The unlucky woman almost fainted, and then, mastering her fears, laid herself down before the lioness.

The animal bounded towards her and then, in the words of the old chronicler, putting off the fury and the fierceness with which she had sprung towards the woman, had pity on her. The woman, who must have thought the bitterness of death was over, then took courage and helped the lioness in her hour of pain. The animal brought forth two cubs, and in their company and that of the grateful lioness the woman Maldonada remained for several days. The lioness each day when she brought food for her cubs gave some to Maldonado, who "was most grateful for the hospitality² that she had earned by exercising the midwife's art."

One day it fell about that the Indians of those parts came on the woman, as she had ventured out to drink upon the river's bank.

They carried her back to their village, where she was married to a chief.

Then, as Rui Diaz de Guzman affirms, with the sincere and simple faith that if it hitherto had not moved many mountains surely should have done so by its own virtue and inherent beauty, "occurred an admirable thing."³

A Spanish captain, having left the fort with a body of his men to search for food, came as it chanced upon the very village in which Maldonada was

¹ "Que estaba en doloroso parto" ("La Argentina").

² "Como que quedó bien agradecida del hospedage por el oficio de comadre que usó" ("La Argentina").

³ "La Argentina" (Rui Diaz de Guzman).

detained. They released her and took her back with them. When Galan heard of her arrival, he at once condemned her to be taken outside the town the distance of a league, and there tied to a tree, to be left to the wild beasts. When night came on, tigers and lions and wild cats, swarming round the tree, were just about to kill her when the lioness appeared. She at once recognized and defended her. After she had put the other animals to flight, stretched at the victim's feet she kept her company. The night went past, and then another day, and still the lioness kept guard. At last some soldiers sent by their captain to see if Maldonada was alive, or if she had been killed and eaten by the wild beasts, arrived and found her living, guarded by her grateful friend. When they began, touched by compassion, to let the woman loose, the lioness, seeing her task was done, made off into the woods. The soldiers "were astonished at the instinct and the humanity" of the lioness.

After this manner, says Rui Diaz de Guzman, this woman, "whom I knew,"¹ was saved from death, after she had been exposed to the wild beasts.

"They called her Maldonada, but better far she had been called Biendonada."² Thus ends the simple history. Rui Diaz de Guzman says that he knew the woman,³ and he was a man of strict veracity.

The incident is in itself so moving and so picturesque that every Argentine⁴ should cherish it and endeavour to believe it true.

¹ "La cual mujer la conoci" ("La Argentina," p. 44).

² The play upon words is quite in the Elizabethan vein.

³ Padre del Techo, in his "Historia de la Provincia del Paraguay," says that when he arrived in the country somewhere about 1649, the occurrence was in everybody's mouth as an indubitable fact.

⁴ It is curious that a latter-day Argentine, the late W. H. Hudson, in his inimitable "Nationalist in La Plata" (London, Chapman and

Ruiz Galan,¹ as he saw things daily growing worse in Buenos Aires, and had heard good reports of Asuncion, determined to abandon Buenos Aires and take the remains of the inhabitants to Paraguay.

This he effected, after having sent two agents to the Spanish court to lay before them the wretched state of the new colony, and his reasons for the step.

The town that Pedro de Mendoza had founded with such great anticipations was left deserted, with but a few men under Captain Juan Ortega to serve as garrison.

Six months had passed, and still Domingo de Irala waited in Asuncion for news from Juan Ayolas, who had completely disappeared. At last, worn out with waiting and anxiety, he set out again upstream to the new port La Candelaria, to get tidings of his chief.

When he arrived there he was met by a delegation of some forty Payaguas.

These cunning savages proposed a conference on the condition that both sides should lay down their arms before the conference began. Irala, who as a prudent captain was doubtful of their good faith, took the precaution to lay his sword down in a position ready to his hand.

Hall, 1895), relates (p. 48) the case of a Gaucho thrown from his horse and left alone at night upon the Pampa with a fractured leg. Several times during the night he heard a puma near him; but he was not afraid, for is not that animal "El amigo del Cristiano"? During the night he heard a jaguar's roar and gave himself up for lost.

However, the puma attacked the jaguar and drove him off, precisely as Maldonada's lioness had driven off the other beasts. The story of Maldonada seems almost probable, remembering the fact that the puma in South America never attacks man, frequently approaches him, and flies even from a child if it is threatened.

¹ Rui Diaz de Guzman, in "La Argentina," refers to him as Captain Francisco Ruiz.

His great anxiety to learn the fate of Juan Ayolas seems to have impelled him to run the risk of being massacred.

The Payaguas arrived in their canoes, for they were in those days and continued to be so till about fifty years ago the chief tribe of canoe Indians on the Paraguay. They went almost entirely naked, so that it was impossible for them to conceal any arms.

Their plan was different, and they relied on their supposed superior agility.

The conference took place with the interminable speeches that the Indians always make on such occasions, though we may well suppose the Spaniards were no whit inferior to them in the extension of their oratory.

All went serenely, till at a given signal from their chief, the Payaguas bounded upon the weapons that the Spaniards had laid on the ground. Irala was before them, and snatching up his sword and buckler, and well backed up by his ensign Carvajal, in a few minutes he had lopped off seven Indians' heads.

Although strong reinforcements kept coming up in their canoes, the Spaniards, fighting for their lives, made such a stout resistance that in the end the Indians took to flight, leaving Irala master of the field, but with the loss of two of his best men.

His wounded numbered forty, himself included. The fight and "glory¹ of the victory" took place in the year 1558.

Irala was in two minds about his movements, being afraid to stay surrounded by the hostile Payaguas, who though defeated still were numerous, and most unwilling to return without some news of his lost chief.

Just as he was about to give the order to set out

¹ "La gloria del yencimiento."

downstream, a voice was heard calling in Spanish on the river bank, demanding to be brought before the general. When he appeared before Irala's tent, he said, "Sir Captain, I am an Indian of the tribe of the Chanas who used to serve Captain Ayolas." It appeared that he had been baptized and had received the name of Gonzalo.¹

After a long and dangerous journey, so Gonzalo said, Ayolas and his men reached two peoples called Samacosis and Sibocosis, somewhere in the Andes of Peru. On his return he waited long at the port of La Candelaria for reinforcements and for ships. Their non-arrival almost drove him to despair, for in the Andes he had talked with Indians, who had told him of rich mines; but without ships and reinforcements of fresh men he was quite paralyzed.

The Payaguas, seeing him in this state, and that his men were few, for hardships and disease had fearfully decreased their numbers, pretended friendship with him. They brought him food, with many protestations of their eternal friendship and goodwill. Then, finding that the soldiers, worn out with hardships, kept a careless watch, they fell upon them as they lay sleeping in their camp.

They were all slain except Ayolas, who under cover of the night hid in the bushes; but the next day the Indians followed up his trail, and pierced him with their arrows as he was trying to escape.

Thus at La Candelaria² Juan de Ayolas perished miserably, tracked like a tiger to his lair.

A bold explorer and a most valorous captain, he was held in high repute by all his followers. As he

¹ Schmidel. Herrera, in his "Decadas," lib. vii., cap. v., p. 107, also corroborates the meeting of Irala with this Indian.

² Charlevoix, in his "Histoire du Paraguay," tome i., p. 41, places La Candelaria in latitude 20° south.

enjoyed the offices of Governor and Captain-General, delegated to him by Don Pedro de Mendoza when he returned to Spain, his death created a new situation throughout the colony.

In spite of his ill-health and constant evil fortune, no one had contested Don Pedro de Mendoza's right to the supreme command.

When he had felt he could no longer cope with the active work that the desperate situation called for, he delegated most of his power to Juan de Ayolas, reserving for himself the titular command. There was no opposition to his action, and Ayolas seems to have been recognized by all as the Governor and Captain-General, although everybody must have been well aware that on Don Pedro's return to Spain, or in the event of his demise, a governor would be sent out, for there was nothing that the Emperor Charles V. was more particular to see enforced than that all governorships in the New World should be held directly from the crown.

In the event of a governor dying without having designated a successor, the citizens in all the Spanish colonies of those days had the right to elect an interim governor from amongst themselves, till one named by the Emperor should be sent out from Spain.

Quite naturally a strong man, when once elected by his fellow-citizens, was often loth to lay down his powers when the new governor arrived. This was the initial cause of the rebellion known as the War of the Pizarros in Peru. In Mexico, Cortés, who at the first was but the lieutenant of Velazquez, the Captain-General of Cuba, was constantly upon the verge of open warfare with him, till his own position was legalized by Charles V.

The citizens assembled at Asuncion elected Domingo de Irala to the vacant post.

Unlike the vast majority of the chief conquistadores, who almost to a man came either from Estremadura or from Andalucia, Irala was a Biscayan, of the Basque race that has given so many navigators of repute to Spain. Though a rough soldier, he claimed, as did (and do, even to-day) nearly all the Basques,¹ to be a gentleman.

To the qualities of a soldier he added those of a diplomatist, and always feigned that honours were being thrust upon him, though in reality he was a most ambitious man.

Brave and experienced in war, he had the confidence of the soldiery.

Schmidel, who was at Asuncion during the proceedings and no doubt voted for him, says, "We elected as our captain Domingo de Ayolas² until the king should send another,³ for he had always shown himself just and benevolent, especially to the soldiers."⁴

Irala claimed that Ayolas, before departing on his last expedition, had invested him as a precaution with all the powers that he himself had received from Don Pedro de Mendoza. This more or less apostolic

¹ In the smallest villages of the three Basque provinces of Alava, Guipuzcoa, and Vizcaya, there are to be seen little square houses, with deep overhanging eaves, hardly larger than mere cottages, with elaborate coats of arms over the doors.

² By a curious error, Schmidel always refers to him as Domingo de Ayolas. This may have been the mistake of a copyist, an ill race since (and before) the days of Chaucer, and possibly in the German of Schmidel "Ayolas" and "Irala" were not easily distinguishable. Schmidel knew perfectly that Ayolas was dead, and that his name was "Juan," not "Domingo."

³ Thus it was known to him and to all that the election of Irala was only temporary.

⁴ "Eligimos por nuestro capitan a Domingo de Ayolas, hasta que el Rey mandase otra cosa, porque siempre se havia mostrado justo y benebolo, especialmente con los soldados." That is to say, he never stopped their plundering.

succession was, no doubt, a powerful factor in Irala's election.

The first act of the new Captain-General was to surround Asuncion with a strong palisade, as it lay open to the attacks not only of the Payaguas but of all the other tribes of Indians. Then he mustered all the citizens and took a census of their numbers.

These had been increased by the advent of the inhabitants of Buenos Aires, now left abandoned but for a small garrison.

Of the two thousand four hundred who had sailed from Spain with Gaboto and Don Pedro de Mendoza,¹ only six hundred men remained, and a small percentage of the women and the children; the rest had perished either in war, by ravages of pestilence, or by starvation, and mostly by the last of the three plagues.

The addition to the colony of Asuncion that came from Buenos Aires was commanded by Francisco Ruiz Galan, the cruel tyrant who had condemned La Maldonada to the wild beasts, Juan Bahan, a priest, and Juan Hernandez, who was a notary.

Schmidel describes them as a sort of governors.²

These rascals on their way up the river stopped at the fort of Corpus Christi and were well received there by the chief of the Timbues Indians.

Schmidel, who though a rough and sometimes brutal soldier was yet a man of honour, recalls with evident disgust³ the proceedings of these "governors."

After a series of outrages upon the friendly Indians and their women, their next act was to kill the un-

¹ "Histoire du Paraguay" (Charlevoix); also "La Argentina" (Rui Diaz de Guzman).

² "Que eran como gobernadores."

³ "... de varios tratos infieles y malvados, havian muerto el Cacique de los Timbues y otros Indios . . . de los quales haviamos recibido muchos beneficios" (Schmidel, cap. xxv., p. 11).

offending chief from whom they had received great benefits.

When they arrived at Asuncion, Irala instantly arrested the authors of these infamous assassinations¹ and sent them down the river to be tried.²

The Timbues, furious at the murder of their chief, attacked the fort of Corpus Christi with such fury that Domingo de Irala had to withdraw to the deserted Buenos Aires, leaving the fort in ruins.³

After fifteen days at Buenos Aires a caravel arrived from Spain saying a ship laden with provisions and with a reinforcement of two hundred men was at the island of Santa Catalina, in Brazil, under the command of Captain Cabrera.

Irala at once despatched Captain Gonzalo de Mendoza to the island to bring back stores, of which the colony was in the utmost need. Schmidel went in the ship, which took a month to make the voyage. It was the custom in those days at nightfall, when ships were sailing in company, to heave to and communicate, and for the pilots to question one another on the day's events. On this occasion the pilots disagreed. One vessel kept the sea till morning. The other ship, on board of which was Schmidel, entered the estuary of the River Plate. A furious pampero sprang up and she was cast away.

Schmidel with five companions⁴ saved themselves by hanging to a spar. Thrown naked on the shore, without either arms or food, they had to find their way to the Islands of San Gabriel, a walk of fifty leagues

¹ "Los autores de las infames muertes" (Schmidel).

² If Buenos Aires was completely abandoned, this passage of Schmidel's needs elucidation.

³ This would seem to show that at any rate a small garrison was kept at Buenos Aires.

⁴ "Yo sali con cinco compañeros agarrados al arbol del nao" (cap. xxx., p. 12).

through unknown country swarming with savage tribes.

Unluckily, Schmidel gives no details of their Calvary, except to say in a prosaic way, "The other vessel had already got to San Gabriel and had Masses said for us, thinking we all were drowned." From the islands of San Gabriel Schmidel was sent to Buenos Aires, and from there to Asuncion.

Spaniards or Germans, all the conquistadores were men of iron, making as little of their experiences as if they had been merely matters of everyday occurrence in their lives. In fact they were so, for the whole history of the conquest teems with such episodes.

Domingo de Irala, on his return to Asuncion, seems to have governed wisely, and on the whole to have conciliated the greater portion of the colonists. The Guaranis, who formed the bulk of the population of Asuncion and the surrounding lands, broke out into rebellion, but were soon crushed by his superior arms.

Seeing the necessity of making friends of them, for all the Spaniards saw they were the only tribe of Indians capable of being civilized, as they were settled on the land in fixed abodes, he treated them with considerable humanity, and when the chiefs came in to make submission, pardoned them at once, cementing peace by marriages between his followers and Indian women of the tribe.

From these alliances most of the modern Paraguayan families must have descended, as Spanish women were extremely scarce.¹

The race was vigorous, and as a general rule seems to have taken more from their fathers than from their

¹ Rui Diaz de Guzman says: "Tenian de las mugeres que les dieron los naturales a los Españoles, muchos hijos e hijas a los cuales crían en buena doctrina y policia" (p. 167).

Indian mothers, both in their features and their characters.

Rui Diaz de Guzman, writing some thirty years after these marriages, says that the Paraguayans had increased astonishingly.

They are, he says, generally very brave and spirited, inclined to war and arms. The latter they all manage skilfully, especially their guns, which weapons they use more than any other of their arms.

Thus, on their expeditions they maintain themselves on game, shooting flying birds with a single ball. So great is their skill, that he who does not kill at the first shot,¹ although it be a sparrow, is counted an indifferent arquebusier.

He goes on to say they are also good horsemen,² in both saddles, and for their amusement break a colt. They are most obedient to their superiors and loyal to the king. Their women are handsome, good

¹ "Son comunmente de gran valor y airosos, inclinados a la guerra y a las armas, las cuales manejan con mucho acierto y destreza, en especial la escopeta ejercitan mas que otras armas; y asi cuando salen a sus jornadas se sustentan de la caza, la cual matan volando a bala rasa, y es tanto exceso su destreza que el que no mata de un tiro, aunque sea un gorrion, es reputado por mal arcubucero" ("La Argentina," p. 57).

This may have been so in the days of Rui Diaz de Guzman. When I knew the Paraguayans, few indeed of them could have shot a bird flying, or even tried to do so. Most of them could miss a standing haystack with tolerable certainty.

² "Son tambien buenos hombres de a caballo, de ambas sillas [that is, in the Moorish saddle with short stirrups, and in the European or Bursaddle], y por su entretenimiento doman un potro; sobre todo muy obedientes a sus mayores y leales con S.M. Las mujeres son de buen parecer, habiles en la labor y costura, nobles de condicion, afables, discretas y sobre todo virtuosas."

Certainly the Paraguayan women when I knew them were excellent sewers and embroiderers. They were also affable enough, and good-looking. As to their discretion and their virtue, that is a matter, after all, of how one looks at things.

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needleworkers, noble in their condition, affable, discreet, and above all virtuous.

Things at Asuncion upon the whole were prospering under Irala's rule. Good relations were maintained with the Indians. The colonists were well affected to him, for he was a man whom they could understand, one who allowed them to enslave, but not ill-treat the Indians, and quite indifferent to all concerns of self. He might have lived his life out peacefully as a sort of patriarchal chief, had not the one great man who wrote his name in golden letters on the history of the River Plate already been upon his passage out from Spain.

CHAPTER V

Of all the conquerors of the New World, none can be compared for breadth of vision and humanity with the man who, on March 18th, 1540, signed a capitulation with the Court of Spain, appointing him Adelantado of the River Plate, on the condition that Juan de Ayolas was dead, and in the event of this not proving to be true, to the rank of Lieutenant-General under him.

This was the celebrated Alvar Nuñez Cabeça de Vaca, a man who, but for a sudden and unexpected *coup d'état* that deprived him of his power, ought to have ranked far above any of his contemporaries.

For once a Spanish colony had the chance of being governed by a far-seeing and humane administrator, a man of noble birth and liberal education, and one determined to render equal justice between the Indians and the colonists. Such men are rare in any epoch and in any country of the world, and they were doubly rare in the Spain of Charles V.

In addition to these qualifications he enjoyed another and a special one. Before soliciting the governorship of the River Plate, he had been ten years a captive with the Indian tribes of Florida. There, cast ashore naked with but four companions, one of them a negro from the town of Azimur in North Africa, after enduring hunger, captivity, and insults, and having passed a thousand perils, he at length reached Mexico, followed by hundreds of the Indians, who adored him almost as a god.

Núñez was born in Andalucía, at Jerez de la Frontera. His father was Francisco de Vera and his mother Teresa Cabeça de Vaca, and he was the grandson of the Adelantado Pedro de Vera who, under Ferdinand and Isabella, subdued and conquered the Canary Islands. His "Commentaries," compiled from his own diaries by Pedro Fernandez, a notary of Seville, are a mine of information, not only of his captivity in Florida and of his governorship of the River Plate,¹ but of the flora, fauna, the various Indian tribes, their customs, superstitions, and all relating to them, collected at first hand.

Throughout the "Commentaries" are to be found innumerable instances of the author's liberality, his tolerance and his breadth of view.

As there are so few outstanding figures in the conquest of the River Plate, it may be well to give a brief account of Alvar Núñez's ten years' captivity in Florida, for it serves to explain his character, and certainly few more surprising chronicles of strange adventure can be found in any literature. Núñez accompanied the expedition of the well-known explorer, Panfilo de Narvaez, to the coast of Florida. Narvaez was a stout soldier, and is remembered chiefly for his defeat

¹ Prefixed to the "Commentaries" in Barcia's collection is a very curious prologue called "Un Examen Apologetico":

"Por el Emo Sñr. Don Antonio Ardoino, Caballero de la Orden del Toison de Oro, Marques de Sorite, Mariscal de Los Reales Exercitos de su Majestad, y Gobernador de Tarragona, Hermano del Emo Sñr. Principe de Palizzi, Marques de la Floresta," etc.

The prologue is highly laudatory of Núñez, and is written in a vein of religious exaltation with frequent quotations from ecclesiastical authorities. It finishes by this testimony to the worth of Núñez:

"Este era pues excelerado Soldado, que parecia en la desnudez a un Bautista, en la abstinencia a un Pablo, a un Antonio Heremita en la tolerancia, a un Macario en la penitencia, a un Pedro de Alcantara en la caridad, a una Teresa de Jesus, a un San Francisco Xavier Apostol de los Indias."

near Pánuco in Mexico, by Cortés, that is described by Bernal Diaz del Castillo in his inimitable style.

Narvaez sailed with a well-appointed squadron of five ships in the month of June of 1527, from San Lucar de Barrameda, in the south of Spain.

He had on board six hundred men, and Alvar Nuñez accompanied him as Treasurer¹ and Chief Magistrate.

Ill luck dogged the expedition from the first. When they arrived in the West Indies at Santo Domingo, the Governor offered Narvaez to provide him with provisions at a place called La Trinidad, in the same island.

In command of four vessels, Nuñez was sent to fetch them; but on his arrival at La Trinidad, a messenger came off in a canoe bringing a letter asking Nuñez to disembark. He answered prudently that he had orders not to leave his ship. Next day there came another messenger. A horse was waiting saddled, on the beach, to take him to the town. Nuñez again refused; but at the entreaty of the crews of the four ships, who were most anxious to obtain fresh meat and water, for their provisions had begun to fail, he went ashore. Before he started, he gave strict orders to the pilots and the captains of the ships that if a gale sprang up they should at once put out to sea; for they were lying at a treacherous anchorage. Hardly had he put his foot ashore than a hurricane burst upon them. In those days, seamen were little learned in the premonitory symptoms of West Indian hurricanes,² and had no instruments to warn them of their approach. All the four ships were driven ashore,

¹ "Tesorero y Alguacil Mayor" ("Comentarios," Alvar Nuñez Cabeça de Vaca, in *La Coleccion de Barcia*. Madrid, 1740).

² He gives, in very sober language, possibly the first description of a West Indian hurricane, in his "Comentarios."

and all the horses with the greater portion of the crews were lost. Nuñez describes the now familiar uprooting of the trees, unroofing of the houses, and the tremendous fury¹ of the wind.

Narvaez, who had remained behind, only came in for the tail of the hurricane and saved the other ships.

From the first it would appear that Nuñez was the most trusted of Narvaez's officers. Though not a soldier, a circumstance that in the Spain of those days did not seem to matter, as all took to arms, as it appears, quite naturally—witness Cortés, Quesada, and Legazpi,² who were all lawyers—Nuñez was sent into the interior with exploring parties.

After the hurricane the expedition set sail for Florida, and seems to have landed somewhere about Apalache, for Nuñez says the country about Apalache³ is very good for cattle rearing.

Either not hearing that the Indians were both fierce and hostile, or from some reason not explained, Narvaez left his ships in Apalache and struck into the interior. It was a most disastrous decision, for the country afforded no provisions, and from the first they had to fight their way, and that in the face of some of the most warlike⁴ tribes of all America.

¹ Those who ventured out went, "siete o ocho hombres abraçados unos con otros para poderos amparar que el viento no nos llevase."

² Legazpi was the conqueror of the Philippine Islands. He had been a lawyer in Mexico.

³ "Tiene muy buenos pastos para ganado." He also gives a minute description of the opossum, perhaps the first: "Un animal que trae los hijos en una bolsa, que en la barriga tiene y todo el tiempo que son pequeños los tiene allí hasta que saben buscar de comer."

⁴ Nuñez says of them: "... todos son flecheros y como son tan crecidos de cuerpo y andan desnudos, desde lejos parecen Gigantes."

He does not say, as many another of the conquistadores would have said, "they are giants," but, "they look like giants." The Seminoles and other tribes of Florida were in effect tall, athletic men, intensely patriotic and warlike. The life and death of their last

Exactly where they wandered is difficult to say, but hunger drove them back to the coast in a most miserable plight.

They had eaten all the forty horses that they brought ashore with them; but fortunately, as it turned out, preserved their hides and the hair of the manes and tails.

In their extremity they resolved to build some little vessels and endeavour to coast along till they reached Mexico. It was a desperate venture, for those seas are rarely quiet for very long, and the violent winds, known locally as "Northers," sudden and violent.

On August 4th, 1527, they began to build, and by September 5th they had constructed five small vessels.

They caulked them with some pitch that a Greek, one Don Teodoro, made from the resin of the pine trees, with which the coast of Florida abounds.

With the horses' manes and tails and fibre from the palm trees they fashioned some rough rigging, and with their shirts contrived a miserable sail. As they possessed no vessels of any kind for water they used the horses' hides. For all provision they had nothing but the shellfish that they gathered¹ on the rocks. On September 22nd they embarked upon their well-nigh desperate cruise. Narvaez set out in the largest of the boats with forty-nine of his companions. As many more went in another with the Commissary. Captains Alonso and Dorantes each had forty-eight aboard with them, as had Captains Tellez and Peñalosa.

chief, Ocoila, forms one of the most moving episodes in the history of the North American Indians and their struggles against the white race. After reading the story, most certainly the credit is not on the side of the noble white man.

¹ Nuñez says one horse remained alive. It is to be hoped he was turned loose to shift for himself, as grass was plentiful.

Nuñez commanded the fifth boat with the remaining forty-nine. Their arms and such stores and equipments as they had loaded the boats down almost to the water's edge. Nuñez affirms that there was no one in the boats that had the least degree of seamanship.¹ Probably the sailors had all remained behind when Narvaez left his ships, before he set off into the interior.

In the whole history of the great adventure, the conquest of the New World, no episode is more astounding, or better shows the stuff of which those "conquerors" were made.

In vessels built of such materials, without a compass or the most elementary knowledge of the sea, disaster was a foregone conclusion if they ran into a gale. Seven days they rowed sitting in water to the waist, maddened with thirst and ravenous with hunger, exposed to the fierce rays of the hot sun by day and drenched with dew at night.

At last, when hope was almost gone, they reached an island. The wretched vessel that Nuñez captained always led the way, and he, seeing some huts, boldly advanced and went ashore. The huts were all deserted, but for the first time after a week of misery they dried their clothes, and having found some skates washed up on the beach, devoured them ravenously, especially the eggs.²

After this poor refreshment they put out to sea again, suffering the extremity of thirst, as the horses' hides, not having been dressed or even dried, but hastily sewn when green, had rotted, and the water had leaked out.

¹ "Y sin tener noticia de la arte del marear, los que alli iban."

"Naufragios de Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca," in Barcia's collection. Madrid, 1749).

² ". . . especialmente los huevos."

To complete the horror of their situation a violent gale sprang up and drove them back to the deserted island.

For six long days it raged, keeping them prisoners almost perishing of thirst, for in spite of all their efforts they could never find a spring.

To avoid death by thirst they put to sea again, although the gale was raging furiously.

All night they laboured at the oars in their frail, overladen boats, thinking each moment was to be their last.

During that awful night five men died suddenly after they had drunk salt water to allay their burning thirst.

Quite in the spirit that Englishmen think is peculiar to the race, but which was so frequently to be observed in the conquistadores, Alvar Nuñez says, "I tell this briefly, for I do not think there is any particular necessity¹ to recount the miseries and hardships in which we saw ourselves; for, considering the place where we were and the little hope of remedy that we had, every one can imagine what he himself would have endured."

He was a man, as well as a conquistador.

When day broke, to their joy they found a harbour and a large Indian town. The chief received them kindly, and fed them upon Indian corn that they devoured like wolves.

The Governor Narvaez gave him in return "much ransom."² This ransom probably was composed of looking-glasses, red cloth, and the inevitable hawk-

¹ "Cuento esto asi brevemente, porque no creo que hay necesidad de particularmente contar las miserias y trabajos en que nos vimos, pues considerando el lugar y la poca esperanza de remedio que teniamos cada uno puede pensar lo que alli pasaria."

² "Muchos rescates." "Rescate" literally means "ransom," but was frequently used in the sense of "present."

bells that played so large a part as currency in every portion of America during the conquest.

At night, when all were resting after their fatigues and perils, the Indians of the tribe (for the cacique seems to have been quite friendly, perhaps on account of the aforesaid "ransom") made a sudden onset on the Spaniards and wounded Governor Narvaez with a stone that struck him in the face.

The Spaniards stood to arms and took the friendly chief a prisoner, determining to hold him as a hostage for the good behaviour of the tribe; then, not thinking themselves safe, all except fifty went on board the boats, taking the wounded¹ Governor along with them.

The Governor left Alvar Nuñez in command, and in an attack the Indians made during the night he too was wounded in the face.

After three days of perpetual fighting they again embarked upon their voyage, although the storm raged ceaselessly.

Once more they suffered agonies of thirst, their wretched water-skins having become unserviceable.

As they were coasting near the shore, not daring to lose sight of land, having no compass with them, some Indians saw them and put off in their canoe. Narvaez asked them if they could give them water, and the Indians answered, willingly, but they must give them something to bring it in. As they had nothing, they were almost desperate, and the Greek, Don Teodoro, who had caulked the ships, maddened with thirst, determined to embark aboard the Indians' canoe. Nothing would turn him from his resolution, so he set out, taking a negro with him, prepared to

¹ Narvaez did not seem able, as was the Black Douglas, to defend his face through a long life of battles, for in addition to this wound he lost an eye in the celebrated battle with Cortés in the State of Vera Cruz in Mexico.

run the risk of torture and of death if he might only drink. The Indians left two of their number as hostages. At nightfall the other Indians came back to the boats. They brought no water, and the negro and the Greek did not return with them. The soldiers wished to kill the hostages, but were prevented, most probably by Nuñez, though he does not say so in so many words. All efforts having failed to redeem their two companions from the Indians, again they put to sea.

The storm separated the boats, and after a night's strenuous rowing, when day broke, Nuñez alone was able to continue labouring at his oar. The boatswain, who was lying down exhausted, directed him by signs. The rest lay in the bottom of the boat like corpses with fatigue. At last they reached a place where they could land, and at the sight of it, those who had appeared half dead revived and scrambled on their hands and knees upon the beach.

Nuñez, having made a fire, the half-dead wretches cowered round it, to cook their few remaining handfuls of Indian corn. Their plight indeed was desperate, and even Nuñez for a little seems to have despaired. No one had the least idea where they had landed, or if the other boats had been able to survive the storm.

This landing took place on November 6th, 1527. Nuñez records it without comment, just as a captain inscribes an entry in his log. Of all the writers on the conquest, he is the one who gives most dates, and always accurately.

None of his men could walk, so Nuñez, having struck on a path, followed it till he reached some Indian huts, where he found two Indians sitting, who gave him some dried skate and a little dog to eat.

In half an hour a band of Indians arrived, who, as he

says, in the miserable state that we were in, appeared like giants to us. The Indians, all fine, tall, athletic men, well armed with bows and arrows, approached the fire, and when they saw the poor half-naked wretches, were moved at their appearance to compassion, and one, advancing, gave an arrow to each one of them. This was a sign of peace.

They promised to return next day and bring provisions, and by daybreak redeemed their promise, bringing a large fish, baskets of ground-nuts, and a certain kind of root.¹

Well fed and rested, courage came back to the adventurers, and they determined once more to brave the sea. Nuñez gave all his remaining beads and looking-glasses in payment for the food to the cacique.

Their boat had got embedded in the sand when they first launched her, and in their weak condition, not wishing to get wet, as the weather was extremely cold, they had left her where she was.

So they stripped off their clothes, and wading into the icy water got the boat afloat, naked as they were born.

In Alvar Nuñez's words, "About two crossbow² shots from the shore a great wave struck us, wetting us all, and as we were all naked and the cold was very great, we lost the oars, and another wave that struck us overturned the boat."

Three of his companions were drowned, and the rest, shivering with cold, were thrown upon the beach without a thing belonging to them left.

In a most moving passage, rendered more touching

¹ This root was probably the potato.

² "A dos tiros de ballesta dentro de la mar, nos dió tal golpe de mar que nos mojó a todos y como íbamos desnudos, y el frío que hacía era muy grande, soltamos, los remos, y a otro golpe que la Mar nos dió trastornó la barca" (p. 14).

by its moderation, he describes what happened to them:

“And although everything we lost was but of little value, at that time it was very valuable. And as it was then November, and the cold very great, and we ourselves in such a state that without difficulty one could have counted all our bones, we looked the very images of death. For my own part, since the month of May, I had eaten nothing but maize toasted in the fire. Sometimes I was obliged to eat it raw; for although they killed the horses, whilst the boats were being made, I could never eat them, and only ten times did I eat any fish. This I say to save many words, for anyone can see in what a state we were. . . . It pleased our Lord that, looking for some embers,¹ we chanced upon some still alight, and with these we made several great fires; and there we were beseeching help from God, and asking pardon for our sins. Many were shedding tears, and everyone had pity, not only on himself but on his fellows, whom they saw in the same miserable state.

“At sunset the Indians, not knowing we had started, returned to bring us food.

“When they saw us in such a different habit and in so strange a state, they started back in fear. I advanced towards them, and having called to them, they came, but frightened. I made them by signs know that our boat was lost, and that three of our fellows had been drowned. The Indians, when they understood all our disaster and our misery, sat down amongst us, and with the sorrow and the pity that they had to see us in such a state, all of them broke out weeping, and so whole-heartedly that you could hear them from afar, and this for more than half an

¹ Only half an hour had elapsed since they had launched the boat with all their arms and clothes in her.

hour; and certainly to see those men, so rude and with so little reason,¹ after the style of the brute beasts, have so much pity on us, made me and others of our company feel our position and misfortune even more keenly."

The picture is indeed poignant and moving to a degree, perhaps unexampled in all the history of America.

Nothing more touching can be imagined than the amazement and the sorrow of the untutored "*gente sin razon*"² "sitting down amongst us," to show the starving, naked Spaniards that instinct soars aloft into an Empyrean where reason breathes with difficulty.

Next day brought news of the other Christians who had escaped the storm. They proved to be Captains Dorantes and Castillo, with the crew of the other boat that had been driven ashore greatly damaged by the sea.

They tried to patch her up, knowing their one chance of escape would be to reach some settlement in Mexico. The patching proved a failure, so they determined to remain where³ they were, and send out four of their strongest men⁴ to try and reach Pánuco by following the coast. Though they had no idea how far off Pánuco really was, they knew their messengers would have to cross innumerable rivers, so they picked out four men all known as first-rate swimmers.⁵ These were Alvaro Fernandez, a ship's carpenter, and one Mendez. The third was Figueroa,

¹ All the Spaniards of those days, even the most enlightened, imagined that the Indians were little endowed with reasoning powers, not knowing that they had quite as powerful minds as any other race of men.

² People without reason.

³ Apparently in some bay to the south of Apalache in Florida.

⁴ The second lot of shipwrecked men had preserved their clothes and arms.

⁵ *Grandes nadadores*.

from Toledo, rather an unusual place in which to find a swimmer of repute. The fourth was Astudillo, from the town of Zafra, also an inland place. With them there went an Indian as a guide, and so they set out on their quest.

Those who were saved now numbered eighty, all assembled on an unknown coast without provisions and with few effective arms, for nearly all their powder had been spoiled.

Game was not plentiful, and if it had been there was little hope of killing it, but with the bows and arrows of the Indians. Fish was their staple, and luckily for them it was and is abundant on the coast of Florida, but the cold turned so intense, the Indians could not venture out in their canoes, and in addition it always blew a gale.

Nothing could well be more appalling than was their situation. The Indians on the island only sowed a scanty crop of maize for their own needs, and as the winter was drawing to a close it was well-nigh exhausted, so it seemed likely that everyone would starve. In a few weeks only fifteen were left alive. As most of these, driven mad by hunger and despair, had devoured the bodies of their dead companions, the Indians were so much scandalized¹ that they almost determined to kill the wretches who survived.

After a long palaver, and most probably at the intercession of Alvar Nuñez, they resolved to let them live. As now their numbers were so much reduced, and as the cold had moderated and the winter gales gone down, the Indians brought in fish in plenty, and once again they were enabled to exist. Unluckily for them, just at this juncture an epidemic broke out amongst the tribe. The Indians, as they always do on such

¹ “ . . . hovo entre ellos tan gran escandalo.”

occasions, died off rapidly, and once again the Christians were in peril of their lives, for the poor Indians thought it was a judgment on them for their cannibalism. Again they held a council, and again determined to kill all of them, but Nuñez, after long intercession with the chief, moved him to spare their lives.

He says, "We called the island where we were thrown 'La Isla de Malhado' "¹—a most appropriate name for it. The Indians were, Nuñez observes, of all the people of the world,² those who most loved their children.

When a child died the mourning lasted for a year. Not only its own parents but the whole tribe lamented for it.

Each morning, just before dawn, they all wept loudly, and again at midday. As every family most probably had lost a child during the year, the lamentation must have been perpetual, and the whole camp must have appeared to be inhabited by howling monkeys. These Indians had little wood to make their fires with, "and of mosquitoes³ great abundance," so that they had enough to howl about when they were so inclined. Their surgery for the most part was but the actual cautery, a remedy common to many savage tribes in every quarter of the world. Nuñez on one occasion had recourse to it; he says with benefit, but he omits to state what he was suffering from. The Spaniards who were civilized and Christian treated diseases in a better way. Their method⁴ was to sign them with the cross and then to blow upon the place and recite a Hail Mary and a Pater Noster over them.

¹ The island of Ill Luck.

² "Es la gente del Mundo que mas, aman a sus hijos."

³ "Tienen de leña gran falta y de mosquitos muy gran abundancia."

⁴ "La manera con que nosotros curamos era santiguarlos, y soplarlos y reçar, un Pater Noster y un Ave Maria." The two schools seem to have been united in the virtues of blowing on the patient.

This treatment was against "un gran dolor del estomago," and proved efficacious—that is, if the "dolor" was not too great to be dislodged.

The barbarous Indians, who had no theory of *materia medica*, used for the same complaint to heat a stone and put it on their stomachs, with very good effect, for they maintained "there was much virtue in all natural things."

These Indians seem to have anticipated some kinds of modern therapeutics, for if the great pain in the stomach did not yield to the application of the heated stone, they laid their hands upon the sufferer's head, blew in his face, and told him he was well. Between this system of faith healing and the more Christian method of the cross and prayer, there seems not much to choose.¹

The Indians treated Nuñez with such barbarity, that after a year's suffering he escaped and joined another tribe, being still naked and ill from all that he had undergone.

How he survived appears miraculous. Little by little he established himself with the tribe that sheltered him, as a wandering pedlar trafficking in shells. Out of these shells the Indians made their knives, and as some tribes lived far inland, he often journeyed forty leagues or more, passing from tribe to tribe. In exchange for the sea-shells, he brought back skins and yellow ochre, with which the Indians daubed their faces, flints to make arrow-heads, and glue to fasten them upon the canes.

For six long years he pursued this life, welcomed and respected by all the Indian tribes, and going naked as they did themselves. What he most valued was that he was free and not constrained to labour as a

¹ Many might rely more on the hot stone laid upon the epigastrium, than either the ordeal by prayer or by auto-suggestion.

slave, as he had been with the first tribe. Time after time he was in danger of his life amongst the trackless wilds, cold, miserable, and nearly starved to death. Yet in no page of his most ample "Commentaries" is there a single instance of his complaining of his fate, railing at Providence, or a harsh word against the Indians, except that now and then he calls them barbarous, a word that in the Spanish of those days was about equal to uncivilized.

The reason that he stayed so long without attempting to escape was that he had a comrade in captivity, one Lope de Oviedo, who was afraid to face the perils of the road. At last this fellow-captive yielded to the prayers of Alvar Nuñez and accompanied him upon a trading expedition to the interior.

Unluckily, upon the road they met some Indians, who threatened them, aiming some arrows at their breasts, but without shooting them. This broke down Lope's nerve, and he returned to the tribe into his slavery. Nuñez was now alone, but at this juncture he got news of three more Christians in captivity. These proved to be Captain Andres Dorantes, one Castillo and a negro, by name Estevanico,¹ from the town of Azimur.

These three and Nuñez were the sole remnants of the eighty Spaniards who had been cast ashore.

Each thought the other had been dead, and as Nuñez touchingly remarks, "that day was one of the greatest happiness that we had in all our lives." It must have been so, truly, and the reunion of the four forlorn and naked men, after six years of suffering, a scene no words can picture, though all can see it in their hearts.

Neither Castillo nor Estevanico knew how to swim, a thing not so remarkable in a Spaniard who may have

¹ Estevanico=Little Stephen. Azimur is a town on the coast of Morocco, called Mulai-Bushaib by the Moors.

been a dweller in some inland place; but in a Moor, almost incredible. On that account, Dorantes had not been able to persuade them to escape, because they feared to pass the rivers and the bays that they all knew must lie between them and the first settlements in Mexico. Nuñez at once offered to help them over every difficulty. Though they agreed, the time was not propitious for their attempted flight.

They agreed to wait six months before attempting to escape, for they knew well that if they tried and failed their lives were forfeited. Of course, time was the thing that they had most at their disposal, but it showed almost superhuman resolution to possess their souls in peace for the six mortal months.

What chiefly influenced them was that the Indians made a yearly pilgrimage to gather cactus¹ fruit, as the plants did not grow upon the coast.

The four captive Spaniards separated, having agreed to meet again at "Las Tunas" in six months' time. When the time arrived that the fruit was ripe, the Indians all migrated to the spot where it grew. As soon as all the Indians were employed in gathering the fruit, the four companions quietly slipped off.

That they walked hard all the first day may be imagined easily. Although they fell in on the way with several Indians, they were allowed to pass, for the fame of Nuñez as a doctor had gone before them, and the Indians evidently had more faith in the new practice of the Pater Noster than in their own more Hippocratican method of the heated stone.

¹ This is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, mention of a plant, the *Opuntia*, that, indigenous to the Americas, now grows so luxuriantly in Southern Europe, Africa, and in the East, that many people think it a native of those countries. In Spanish America it is generally called "Tuna," and Alvar Nuñez says: "Aquellos Indios iban a otro tierra a comer Tunas. Esta es una fruta, que es del tamaño de Huevos, y son vermejas y negras y de muy buen gusto" (p. 19).

When they arrived at the first large Indian village they were well received and entertained, and guides were given them to set them safely on their way and to make sure that they were not attacked upon the road.

All this fell out because on the first night of their arrival at the village several sick¹ Indians, having heard of the great white medicine-man, insisted on being cured at once.

"After we had made the sign of the cross over them and recommended them to God, the Indians instantly said that all the evil had departed² from them." In gratitude they brought him Tunas and a piece of venison, "so that each day, thanks to the Lord, our fame increased amongst them."

After this incident, the Indians passed the night in feasting and in dancing, and their rejoicing continued for three days.

All this time Nuñez was still naked,³ and slept at night between two fires to keep away the cold, and not impossibly some wandering jaguar. He says that he esteemed the Indians of Florida the finest of the tribes that he had ever come across, and he had certainly a large experience of the Indians both in North and South America. When they engaged in battle, as they fired their arrows they jumped⁴ to one side or the other, uttering loud yells.

The Indians were so acute of vision that they cared little for the Spaniards' crossbows, for they were nearly

¹ The malady was indigestion, so that the "cure" was not entirely outside of probability.

² "Y despues que les hubo santiguado y recomendado a Dios, en aquel punto, Los Indios dixeron que todo el mal se les havia quitado."

³ Como nasci.

⁴ This shooting and jumping at the same time was the fashion of all old-time bar-room fights in the United States. The practice may have been taken from the Indians.

always able, in the open, to see the arrows coming and to avoid them, a thing no Spaniard could do.

However, in confined places they suffered heavily. After the fashion of all the conquistadores, Nuñez remarks, "The horses¹ are what the Indians universally dread."

So the four companions were passed on from tribe to tribe, their fame as medicine-men always increasing.

As payment the Indians gave them furs, so that at last they were well clothed in skins of animals.

On one occasion the Indians brought a man to Nuñez with an arrow-head firmly embedded in his chest. This was a different thing to giving simple decoctions of wild herbs or uttering prayers after having duly signed the patient with the cross.

Though it was death to fail, it would have been an instant loss of reputation not to attempt the cure. Nuñez, with a knife made of shell, cut boldly to the bone, and with considerable trouble² got the arrow out. He then sewed up the wound, and as the man still bled profusely, stanchd the blood with filings of a horn. Next day he cut the stitches, and the man, who must have been a stoic, said he was almost well, and he had felt but little pain during the operation.

This piece of rude but perfectly successful surgery naturally raised the fame of Nuñez and his friends extraordinarily. They now began to say that if he

¹ "Los caballos son los que los Indios universalmente temen."

El Inca Garcilasso, Cortés, Quesada, Bernal Díaz, Polo de Ondegardo, Pedro Cieza de Leon, and many other historians of the conquest have similar passages to the same effect.

Nuñez is amongst the early mentioners of tobacco, for he says (cap. xxvi., p. 29): "En toda la tierra se emborrachan con un humo, y dan quanto tienen por el."

² "Con gran trabajo en fin la saqué."

was not actually a god, he was most certainly one of the Children of the Sun.¹

Their progress onward was now an easy matter, for their fame preceded them, and every tribe received them with high honour, disputing who should entertain them in his tent. A multitude of Indians attached themselves to the four skin-clad doctors, who but a little time before were starving, naked, and but little better than mere slaves.

These Indians followed them, partly on account of the veneration in which they held all doctors, and partly because by representing themselves as followers of Nuñez, they were well fed² and entertained.

At every town they passed the Indians brought them mantles of fine furs, and more provisions than they could possibly consume.

These they distributed amongst their followers, who grew in numbers every day, so that at last they were accompanied by several hundred men. As they went on, they cured the sick and gave good counsel to the chiefs. To add to their estate and dignity, Nuñez and the two other Spaniards seldom spoke personally to any Indian under the rank of chief, but used the negro³ as their Mercury.

Tribes that were at open war with one another buried the hatchet to come and see the wondrous strangers, and to bring their sick men to be healed.

All this time they were advancing southward

¹ "Entre todas esas gentes se tenian por muy cierto que veniamos del cielo" (cap. xxi., p. 30).

² They were much in the position of the crowds of mendicants who in the Middle Ages were fed at the monasteries in Spain on what was called "La Sopa Boba." Many people in every age have experienced an irresistible attraction to this "Fool's Soup."

³ How Nuñez explained away the negro is difficult to say; but even the Indians could not have thought he was a Child of the Sun.

towards the Spanish settlements in Mexico, traversing what is now Louisiana and the State of Texas.

By degrees they began to hear rumours of other Christians, and now and then in Indian villages they saw a rusty buckle or a hawk-bell that had been procured in trade.

At last, with feelings that can be imagined better than described, they came upon the tracks of horses, and their joy was intense. Nuñez, who knew the fickleness of savages, and feared that the Indians might refuse to let them join their fellow-countrymen, begged one of his companions, who, as he says, was younger and far stronger than himself, to follow up the trail. The man refused, as did the others, so Nuñez set out with some Indians to accompany him. All of a sudden he descried¹ five men on horseback. When they were hailed in Spanish by a man dressed in skins, burnt to the colour of an Indian, and with his hair flowing down to his waist, the horsemen stood astounded, as well they might have done.

Nuñez, who must have felt as if he had descended to an unknown world, all strange to him, asked them at once to take a note of the year, month and day when they encountered him, and then to lead him to their officer.

Their captain was one Diego de Alcaraz, who received him kindly, telling him he was now in Mexico, and that the nearest town was San Miguel, in New Galicia.²

Nuñez says nothing of his feelings after his ten years' wandering in the wilds.

¹ "Cinco Cristianos de a caballo."

² New Galicia is rather a vague term. Pánuco is in the State of Tamaulipas. In Blaeu's map Nueva Galicia seems to have comprehended nearly all the western portion of Mexico. It may have reached from sea to sea, and in that case would have comprehended Tamaulipas. As to San Miguel, there are many villages of that name in Mexico.

Such was not then the fashion of the times: but he shows plainly that a bitter disillusion was in store for him on his return to his own people, though he does not complain.

So Alexander Selkirk must have felt when, in the whaler that took him from his lonely kingdom, he saw the cliffs of Juan Fernandez sink into the sea. He, too, was once more with his fellow-countrymen, heard the oaths of the sailors, saw the rough manners of the men whom he had dreamed about for years, and chafed his hands with hauling on the sheets.

The promised land is always just ahead of us. Well within sight, of course, but better far seen through the optic glass of the imagination than when actually attained. Heaven itself is far away, so placed, no doubt, by theologians and the wise fathers of the Church, who indeed made the path difficult and the wicket strait, so that the few who have passed in shall not return to tell us if indeed all is as we have been encouraged to believe.

Disillusion came to Nuñez almost from the first day of his return. As they drew near to the first settlements, he was pained to see that the Indians who accompanied him fled in terror to the woods if they descried a Spaniard riding, even far away.

As many of his followers were dressed in buffalo robes,¹ the Spanish soldiers wished to take them, and Nuñez had to interfere. Then they wished to take some of his followers for slaves, an action Nuñez indignantly opposed, as he did upon all occasions during his subsequent career.

He plainly saw that nothing but ill-treatment was in store for his followers if they persisted in accompani-

¹ "Mantas de Vacas." This must be one of the earliest references to "buffalo robes," although Bernal Diaz and Cortés speak of "Vacas jorobadas"—*i.e.*, "Humpbacked Cows."

ing him, a thing they wished to do despite the terror they experienced of the Christians. So, sadly, he dismissed them to their homes, bidding them farewell with tears, and with such presents as he could command. All theirs he returned to them, for he was indeed one of the Children of the Sun.

Before the Indians started on the homeward trail they made, as it were, the confession of their faith in Nuñez, saying, "You came amongst us naked and barefooted, and they [the other Christians] well dressed, riding on horses, and armed with lances. You and your comrades were not greedy, but, on the contrary, everything we gave you you returned . . . the others¹ only wished to steal all that they saw, and never gave a gift to anybody."

It was too true, as all the history of Mexico is there to show.

This sense of justice between man and man, without respect of colour or of race, proved his undoing later on in Paraguay.

Before the Indians left him, Nuñez gave them advice that showed his liberality and far-sightedness. He told them to build towns to live in, and to sow crops so that they should not be exposed to constant famines, as they were when game was scarce. He also told them to build churches.² This they assured him they would do, as they would have promised him to fly, for the faith they had in him.

Lastly, he gave them a synopsis of the Christian faith in a more reasonable way than any other of the conquerors. He did not say, as did the others, that God had given America to the Emperor Charles V., or that the Indians were the Emperor's vassals; but

¹ "Comentarios de Alvar Nuñez" (cap. xxxiv., p. 39).

² As regards the towns and churches, he observes: "Afirmo por muy cierto que si no lo hicieran era por culpa de los Christianos."

spoke to them upon the principles of right and wrong, and matters of that kind. In fact, his sermon, in the Scotland of old days, would have been called "a cauld morality."

All his advice was good, and just such as colonial administrators give to their "Indians" to-day; but it might quite as well have been given to jaguars or to albatrosses, for the ears that heard it knew no other music than the wind amongst the trees, a harmony that influenced their lives in a way Nuñez perhaps did not dream about.

The Spaniards sent him and his companions for the first forty leagues by night and by unfrequented roads, so that the Indians should not see him, for his ideas of how they should be treated were widely different from those held by his fellow-countrymen. No greater testimony could be adduced towards his uprightness and his humanity.

When at last he arrived in Mexico he was well treated by the viceroy, and after two months' sojourn in the city he set out for Spain. After being chased by a French pirate, he arrived in Lisbon safely upon August 9th, the Eve of Saint Lorenzo, in the year 1537—just ten years from when he had set out.

CHAPTER VI

THIS was the man, tried in adversity, passed through the crucible of ten years' suffering, who was destined for a brief space to sway the destinies of the unlucky colony of the River Plate.

His vast experience of the Indian tribes; his wide humanity and liberal views; his patience under hardships, and the extraordinary power he must have wielded over men, evinced by his strange metamorphosis from a slave into a demi-god—all seemed to point to his success when called on to command. As will appear, his trusting nature, and his faith in men who could not rise to the perception of his views, proved his undoing, and his undoing caused the relegation of the great viceroyalty to the background for at least a hundred years.

Under his enlightened rule the River Plate would certainly have flourished, and its great natural resources, that for so long were unsuspected by the Spanish crown, become known to the world.

Most men, after ten such eventful years, that must have brought Nuñez well on in middle life, might not unnaturally have hesitated before once more embarking upon fresh adventures in an unknown land. Nuñez was not of those who care to sit down and indulge their travellers' melancholy, wrapped like Jaques in the frequent contemplation of their travels.

After "that God," in his own words, "had pleased

to¹ take him out of captivity and the hardships that he suffered for ten years in Florida," he entered in 1540 into a capitulation with the crown of Spain to rescue the remains of the unfortunate expedition that Don Pedro de Mendoza had led out to the River Plate.

By the terms of this capitulation, besides the horses, arms, and stores that he covenanted to provide, he was obliged to pay down eight thousand ducats² for the expenses of the expedition. The crown of Spain was always parsimonious in assisting expeditions to America, although it lavished money with an open hand on its Italian wars.

The expedition of Don Pedro de Mendoza, that had failed so disastrously, was one of the rare exceptions to the rule; but then Don Pedro was a favourite at court.

Núñez was to be Governor and Captain-General of the River Plate and to enjoy the title of Adelantado, with a twelfth part of the revenue.

In his capitulation³ appears the celebrated and so often quoted clause, "that no barristers or solicitors should pass to the Indies."⁴

It is not known whether or no it was inserted at the instance of Alvar Núñez; but it may well be that his ten years' residence with a race of men who were a law unto themselves showed him the inexpediency of delegating natural rights to anyone.

Núñez bought ten ships and a caravel in Seville, and arranged for another in the Canary Islands.

¹ "Despues que Dios fuese servido de sacar Alvar Núñez Cabeça de Vaca del captiverio y trabajos que tuvo diez años en la Florida y vino a estos reinos en el año del Señor de mil y quinientos y treinta y siete, donde estuvo hasta el año de quarenta" ("Comentarios").

² The silver ducat of those days was worth about three shillings, and the gold ducat about nine shillings.

³ "Asiento."

⁴ "Que no passasen abogados ni procuradores a las Indias."

His flagship was just built and measured three hundred and fifty tons; most of the others hardly exceeded fifty in their measurement. From early May till near the end of September Nuñez was occupied in getting ready for his voyage.

On November 2nd he set sail.

Although by that time the various sailing routes to South America were known, a voyage in those days was not without its perils and delays.

In nine days the fleet arrived at Palma in the Canary Islands, and after having rested for three weeks set out again for the Cape de Verdes. Upon the passage the flagship sprang a leak, and they arrived at Santiago, in the Cape de Verdes, with all hands at the pumps.

There Nuñez disembarked his people and his horses to rest and to refresh themselves. To stop the leak they had to unload all the cargo and the stores, and after five and twenty days' hard work started again upon their quest. They passed the line in safety, avoiding luckily the belt of calms known to old-fashioned sailors as the Doldrums, and were expecting to make land shortly somewhere on the Brazilian coast when a strange episode occurred.

As Nuñez stood upon the poop, probably in high spirits that the voyage was nearly over, the purser came to him and told him that of one hundred barrels of fresh water they had embarked, only three were left.

Land was still out of sight, and the three barrels were all they had to serve four hundred men and thirty horses, so that their situation was most perilous.

For the next three days they crowded on all sail, and luckily the wind was fair, in hopes to reach the land before the water was exhausted.

"On the fourth day, an hour before the dawn,

occurred¹ an admirable thing, and as it does not seem out of place I will relate it here.

“And it was thuswise: as we were sailing on, and the ships just about to run upon high cliffs we could not see, nor had a single person on the ships perceived them, a cricket that a soldier who was ill had brought aboard the ship at Cadiz, wishing to hear the music that the cricket made, suddenly broke into its song; and though we had been at sea for two months past, no one had heard it sing, which made the soldier very angry; and as that morning the cricket smelt the land, it started singing, and its music wakened the men on board the ship, who saw the cliffs about a crossbow shot in front of us; and it is certain if the cricket had not sung that we should all of us have been lost, four hundred men and thirty horses; so we all took it for a miracle² that God had wrought for us, and from that time the cricket every night made music for us.”

A voyage was indeed a voyage then, and those who voyaged, all were imbued with faith sufficient to move every mountain. In fact it does remove them, if men but mark the music of the crickets that are singing everywhere around, though so few listen to them. For, after all, most mountains only exist in the imagination, and faith soon levels them, and miracles take place in hundreds hourly that are never chronicled.

After a hundred leagues more sailing the expedition reached a harbour called La Cananea, beyond Cape Frio, so that the episode of the cricket must have occurred about Bahía, for at Pernambuco there are no cliffs, such as the “Comentarios” refer to. At La Cananea, Nuñez landed and took possession for the

¹ “Al quarto dia un hora antes que amanesciese acaesció una cosa admirable” (“Comentarios de Alvar Nuñez”).

² “Comentarios,” cap. ii., p. 2.

crown of Spain. Then he went on to the island of Santa Catalina, arriving there on March 29th, 1541.

This island had become the refuge for many of the members of Don Pedro de Mendoza's unlucky expedition. At Santa Catalina all the shipwrecked Spanish sailors and adventurers who had escaped from Buenos Aires, and from the various expeditions that had reached Brazil resorted and had formed a settlement. Having no authority over them, and being mostly men of a low class, their first act had been to enslave the Indians as far as possible.

Here Nuñez experienced the first opposition to his humane and kindly treatment of the Indians that rendered him eventually unpopular with his own countrymen. He says himself, during the time he was in the island, that his first care¹ was to treat the Indians well.

Had his policy been pursued, thousands of Indians might have been preserved to the republics of Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. They would have made a nucleus of citizens attached by tradition, race and birth to the soil, and constituted a counterpoise to the not always valuable European emigration of to-day that threatens to overwhelm the real Argentines.

His first experience of the temper of the colonists was with two Franciscan friars. This is curious, for the Franciscans, next to the Jesuits, were usually the best friends that the Indians possessed, standing between them and the oppression of the colonists.

These two friars, Fray Bernaldo de Armenta and Fray Alonso de Lebrón, had got into bad odour with the Indians, who had killed several of their followers for dispossessing them of their miserable huts.

Nuñez made peace for the moment and told the

¹ "Les hizo muy buenos tratamientos."

friars that their duty was to convert the Indians, and not to mix up in their broils.

They very likely made what they would have called the rabbit's laugh¹; but in their hearts never forgave him and raised up trouble subsequently when they had the chance.

From Santa Catalina, Nuñez sent on a caravel with Don Felipe Caceres, the government auditor, to the River Plate. Bad weather drove the vessel back to Santa Catalina, and at the same time that it arrived another vessel came into the port with several Spaniards on board of her, who brought important news.

They informed Nuñez that Buenos Aires had been resettled, and that Ayolas, having gone up the river to explore, had been surprised and slain.

They also told him that a new town called Asuncion² had been founded on the Paraguay, and that Domingo de Irala had been chosen Governor.

By the death of Ayolas, Nuñez, by virtue of his capitulation with the Emperor, was now, without the shadow of a doubt, both Governor and Captain-General.

As he was told that there were far more Spaniards in Asuncion than had remained in Buenos Aires, he at once determined to send on the fleet and make the journey overland.

It was a resolution worthy of the man. No one had ever traversed the enormous distance that lay between the island of Santa Catalina and Asuncion.

Nothing was known³ about the disposition or the numbers of the Indian tribes. No map existed; game was scarce, and information as to the difficulties of the road quite unprocurable.

¹ "La risa del conejo."

² Nuñez always writes Asuncion, Asencion.

³ Small bodies of Portuguese may have gone some distance into the country, but certainly no large expedition had ever traversed it.

Still, after the fashion of the rest of the conquistadores, Nuñez set out on his long trail with a light heart. On October 18th, 1541, he transported his soldiers and six and twenty mares and horses to the mainland.

At Santa Catalina he left one hundred and forty men under the command of Pedro de Estopiñan Cabeça de Vaca, who was his nephew. Following his usual policy of trying to make friends with the Indians, he made them many presents, and enjoined all the Spaniards to treat them well and to avoid hurting their prejudices.

In this, besides humanity, he showed common sense and made his base secure. Then, on November 2nd, he began his memorable march.

His sole guide must have been the compass and the stars. After some nineteen days of marching they reached a range of hills, not very high, for in Brazil there are no mountains of great height, but wooded to the top. Through these primeval woods they had to cut their way, opening a path with axes and their swords.

By this time all the provisions they had brought from Santa Catalina were exhausted; but luckily they came upon an Indian settlement, the first they had encountered on their way, for all the country through which they passed was uninhabited.

Fortunately, as it turned out, the settlement was one of Guaranis, an agricultural tribe, quiet and peaceable, and quite unlike the fierce and warlike warriors Nuñez had met in his captivity.

These Indians brought provisions cheerfully, anxious to exchange their manioc and corn for shirts and cloths, hatchets, knives, or anything the Spaniards offered them.

Besides their fields of manioc¹ and maize, they all reared ducks and chickens² in the same way men do

¹ *Jatropha Manioc*.

² "Crian gallinas, a la manera de nuestra España" (cap. vi., p. 5).

in Spain. The land they tilled was very fertile, the climate excellent, "neither too hot nor cold," and it produced two harvests in the year in great abundance.

Though they were peaceably inclined, they yet were warriors, fighting most bravely, as Nuñez says, in defence of their own lands.

He called the province Vera, his father's name (although he always used his mother's¹); but the name was not destined to be permanent and has quite disappeared.

After some days of rest he once more started, and in three marches came to the River Yguaçú.²

There the pilots took an altitude, so we may suppose the expedition was, so to speak, sailed just as a ship at sea.

As the route now lay through the territory of the peaceful Guaranis, the expedition found plenty of good provisions at each village that they passed.

Nuñez was most particular to pay for everything. Most probably he was the only one of the conquistadores who ever did so. None of the others ever paid for anything. No Spanish soldier was allowed to go into an Indian's hut without the owner's leave, for Nuñez in his ten years' captivity had learned how much the Indians resented all intrusion in their homes.

No doubt these wise precautions were not to the liking of the soldiery, who had not come ten thousand miles to pay for things just as they did at home, and so perhaps the seeds of disaffection were sown upon the march.

In a week's travelling they reached the River Taquari, crossed it, and once again came to a country

¹ Why he did so is hard to understand, keeping in mind the Spanish proverb of those days: "El que tiene ruin padre, toma el nombre de la madre."

² The name signifies Great Water, from Y, water, and guazu, great, in Guarani.

that was uninhabited.¹ Then they reached a settlement called Tugui, where food was so abundant that the soldiers ate till they got fever, a rare experience for a conquistador.

After this Capua, they were five days before they saw a living soul, passing another range of wooded hills, in whose deep valley grew enormous canes.²

When they once more came to a settled district the Indians, headed by their chiefs, came out to meet them, bringing provisions in an Arcadian style.

Bernaldo de Armenta and Fray Alonso, the two friars, thinking perhaps that the Church should enjoy the first-fruits of the land, contrived with all their followers to be the first to reach the villages, so that, although provisions were abundant, they secured everything.

The soldiers were enraged at this, and when the Governor remonstrated, the friars left the expedition and took another road.

Throughout the conquest numerous references appear to the fear the Indians had of horses, and not unnaturally, for they were animals unknown to them.

One of the most touching of these occurred upon this expedition, and only such a man as Nuñez would have chronicled it.

"The Indians," he says, "had a great terror of the horses, and begged the Governor (Nuñez) to speak to them and ask them not to be angry,³ and so that they should be contented brought them abundant food."

In latitude 25° the expedition once more struck the Yguaçu, according to the pilot's observation of the stars.

¹ All this time the expedition had been crossing what is now the Brazilian province of Parana.

² "Cañas muy altas." These were, of course, bamboos.

³ "Tenian muy gran terror de los caballos, y rogaban al Governador que los dixese a los caballos que no se enojasen y por los tener contentos los traian de comer" (cap. x., p. 8).

Just such an attitude the Indians manifested to the celebrated

Nuñez sent half of the expedition in canoes. The other half followed the bank, keeping in touch with the canoes, with orders to rejoin each other at the point where the Yguaçú reaches the Parana.

Both parties arrived safely at the trysting-place.

Not finding the vessels that he had written to Irala to send from Paraguay, Nuñez embarked his sick men on a raft, and himself pushed on rapidly across the country, that became in after years the Jesuit Missions, towards Asuncion.

On March 11th, 1542, he arrived at Asuncion, having performed a march unparalleled in all the annals of the conquest, for he had not a single fight upon the road. True much of the country that he traversed was uninhabited, and the rest in the possession of the peaceful Guaranis. For all that, without doubt his urgent orders that everything the soldiers took was to be paid for on the spot avoided difficulties, even with the Guaranis.

The journey occupied exactly four months and nine days, without the loss of any of his horses, and but one man, who was drowned crossing the Parana.

The expedition did not kill a single Indian, and for that circumstance alone deserves to be marked with a white stone.

None of the conquerors could say as much, and very few of those who in our own time conquered Africa.

In a short time the sick men who had been put aboard the raft arrived, and Nuñez got full tidings of

“Morcillo,” the horse that Cortés left wounded on his way to Honduras. They worshipped him, bringing him fruit and chickens, so that the poor beast starved to death.

True, after his death they made a statue of him as a god. This shows that “*Il faut souffrir pour être Dieu.*” An ignorant and silly friar broke the statue into pieces, as one supposes *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, an attitude of mind that would suppose the deity to the full as foolish as his worshippers.

the death of Ayolas and the abandonment of Buenos Aires by the colonists.¹

Thus the first real settlement in the Rio de la Plata was at Asuncion, one thousand miles in the interior.

All the chief Spaniards of Asuncion received Nuñez with more urbanity and courtesy than with heartfelt goodwill. His methods with the Indians had gone before him, and as already the richer of the Spaniards had established a sort of patriarchal tyranny over the Guaranis, treating them as their vassals, and without much regard to the fact that they were the real owners of the land, it is not wonderful.

On the contrary, the Indian chiefs came out with all their tribesmen to receive him, bringing him presents, and to his astonishment addressing him "in our own Castilian tongue."²

His march had been a mixture of good fortune and good policy.

His name was made already, and his fame had gone before him with the Indians. For all that, the situation that confronted him was fraught with difficulty.

¹ Herrera ("Historia de las Indias," Decada VII., lib. 4, cap. iii.) says that Alvar Nuñez sent down a force of men to resettle Buenos Aires. Father Lozano, in his "Descripcion Chorographica del Gran Chaco," etc. (Cordoba de Tucuman, 1739), contradicts the statement.

El Licenciado Centenera, quoted by Dean Funes in his "Ensayo Civil de la Historia del Paraguay" (Buenos Aires y Tucuman, Buenos Aires, 1810), affirms Herrera was in error. Nuñez no doubt saw the advisability of resettling Buenos Aires, for a port was of the first importance; but during his short government he was too much occupied in exploring the interior and too much hampered by the intrigues of Irala to have been able to spare men for that purpose. It is curious that Lozano contradicts himself further on, and says that Nuñez despatched Gonzalo de Mendoza with two brigantines to succour those he had sent to resettle Buenos Aires. This leaves the matter in some doubt. However, Argentines in general seem to consider it an established fact that the city was not really resettled till 1580, by Don Juan Garay. Nuñez, in his "Comentarios," refers to sending Gonzalo de Mendoza to Buenos Aires, but does not say that he resettled it.

² "En nuestra lengua Castellana."

CHAPTER VII

NUÑEZ at once displayed his commission from the Emperor, naming him Governor in the event of Juan de Ayolas being dead.

This fact was now established, and outwardly he was well received. All swore obedience to him, but from the first Irala, who had been elected interim Governor, was jealous of him and stirred up opposition covertly. This was but what might have been expected of him, for it is hard to lay down power after having exercised it without question for a considerable time, and even with applause.

Moreover, the nature of the two men was so opposed that it was certain they would never understand each other: on the one hand, the rough Biscayan, Irala, a soldier with but scant education and no ideas beyond those ordinarily held by men of those days, and on the other, Nuñez, the Andalusian gentleman, quick-witted, cultured, and holding views that were at least as advanced and as humane as those held by the best educated colonial governors of to-day.

Both were quite honest and most upright men, and against neither of them can it be charged that he had any wish to make his fortune, the usual object of most governors sent out from Spain. Both were brave soldiers; but neither of them had held independent posts, and this was often brought up against Nuñez, though it applied to Irala in the same degree. Curiously enough, most of the officials sent from Spain were against Nuñez from the first, no doubt be-

cause they saw that his good treatment of the Indians would prevent them making fortunes by their forced labour and the plunder of their lands.

These were Felipe Caceres, the government accountant, Alonso de Cabrera, Garcia Vanegas, and one Ugarte, Irala's confidant. All these held offices of greater or of smaller importance from the crown. Cabrera was the government inspector,¹ Vanegas treasurer, and Caceres, accountant-general.

After having assembled all the Spaniards of Asuncion, Nuñez took a census, and found they numbered about thirteen hundred, and that a considerable portion of them were extremely poor. Then he convoked the clergy, and exhorted them to do their best to indoctrinate the Indians, and gave them several vessels for the service of the Church, together with a butt of wine.

Whether it was altogether prudent to preach to churchmen, may be well doubted, for it is possible they may have taken his exhortation as a reflection on their zeal.

The greatest difficulty he had to face was how to treat Irala, for the man had been elected fairly interim Governor, and had governed wisely according to his lights. Nuñez, who was the soul of generosity himself, determined to attempt to win him over to him, and named him his Lieutenant-General.

The position in itself was greater far than anything to which Irala could have reasonably aspired, had not the death of Ayolas given him his chance.

As was to be expected, having been the first, Irala bitterly resented having to descend to an inferior rank. He instantly began to indispose the colonists against their Governor, but diplomatically, never once coming out into the open, for he was one of

¹ Veedor.

those who understood the value of the Spanish saying as to those who throw the stone,¹ but cover up the hand.

All the old soldiers, such as Schmidel, who had served with Irala from the first, were his supporters, for they perceived at once that under Nuñez all their marauding and their licence would be at an end.

For months a war with the Agaces Indians had been going on. These savages were a sort of river pirates, who in their canoes infested all the Paraguay, plundering and killing the peaceful Guaranis.

Nuñez describes them² as very tall, with bodies and limbs like giants, and he was well accustomed to see tall and powerful Indians in North America.

Poverty having increased to a great extent amongst the poorer Spaniards in Asuncion, Nuñez provided them with clothes and food, and thus attached them to his cause against the crown officials and the richer colonists. They and the poorer Indians told him that Irala's officials had ground them down with taxes and with dues upon all kinds of food, that they escaped themselves.

Nuñez at once reduced the taxation of the poor, and forced the crown officials to contribute to the Treasury. This not unnaturally made him hated by them, and indirectly³ they all strove to do him injury.

The most corrupt of them he put in prison.

They never forgave him, for it was always tacitly assumed that an official in America was there to make his fortune, just as in Morocco, only twenty years ago,

¹ "Tirar la piedra y esconder la mano."

² "Esta es una gente muy crecida de grandes cuerpos y miembros como gigantes."

³ "Le cobraron grande odio y enemistad, y por vias indirectas intentaron todo el mal que pudiesen" ("Comentarios," cap. xviii., p. 16).

a governor of a province always retired¹ a wealthy man after five or six years of power.

In the time of Nuñez, and down to fifty years ago, the Chaco Indians, known as Guaycurús, raided the settlements in Paraguay. Of all the Indians to the eastward of the Andes they were the most ferocious that the Spaniards had to face. Luckily they were far from numerous; but although few in numbers they were good fighters, and far better disciplined² than were the Pampa Indians with whom in later times the Spaniards and the Argentines had to contend, till within living memory they were finally subdued.

Nuñez, having undertaken to check their inroads, crossed the river to the Chaco side with his best horses and picked men.

The Chaco,³ with its waving sea of palms and grasses almost as tall as canes, lay opposite the rising settlement of Asuncion. Even to-day mysterious, it must have been at the time when Nuñez crossed his horses and his men as little known as was the moon.

Gaboto and Ayolas, as they sailed up the River Paraguay, must have looked out upon its interminable marshes as they stood on the high poops of their caravels. They must have wondered at the great rivers, the Pilcomayo and the Vermejo, as they passed their mouths, and speculated where they took their rise. When Indians crowned with feathers shot out in canoes to marvel at their ships, perhaps to send a flight of arrows at them and then disappear into some

¹ Sometimes, if he got too rich, the Sultan "squeezed" him, as it was called—that is, stripped him of his authority and confined him in a dungeon till he disgorged his wealth.

² "Era cosa muy de ver la orden y el aderezo de guerra" (cap. xx., p. 17).

³ "Chaco" is said to mean in the Quichua tongue, the "Hunting" or the "Surround." In fact, it is almost an equivalent of the Gaelic "Tinchel."

sheltered creek concealed in reeds, the Spaniards must indeed have felt that they had come into a new, strange world.

Flocks of flamingoes hovered on the banks, and great black divers sat upon the trees scanning the waters of the stream for fish; the flocks of parrots and of chattering parakeets; the alligators lying with their bodies sunk beneath the surface and their heads just awash; the myriad humming-birds poised above the flowers; the Ceibas¹ with their bunches of great purple flowers; the feathery bamboos; the incessant humming of the insects in the air, and the macaws, blue, red, and yellow, floating like birds of prey above the trees, must have made even those stout navigators think that they had got into a paradise, or at least such another garden as that upon the Tigris before the Fall, when man and all the other animals dwelt in harmony.

Father Lozano,² Dobrizhoffer,³ and Del Techo⁴ have described the Chaco of their day, and it remained much as they saw it until fifty years ago, only a mile across the river from Asuncion; but yet almost as far removed as the fixed stars, unmapped, impenetrable, and with the wandering tribes that the good fathers wrote about, still masters of the land.

Into this mysterious territory, for the first time, Nuñez led Europeans and their horses, whose introduction was destined to entirely change the life and habits of the tribes.

Before the introduction of the horse, the range of any tribe must have been circumscribed. When mounted they could scour the country and attack

¹ Bombax Ceiba.

² "Descripción Chorographica del Gran Chaco, Gualamba," etc. (Cordoba de Tucuman, 1733).

³ "De Abiponibus."

⁴ "Historia de la Provincia del Paraguay." Madrid, 1897.

the Spanish settlers in the provinces of Cordoba and Santa Fé, and rapidly retreat into their reedy fastnesses. Father Dobrizhoffer,¹ than whom there was no keener observer of the customs of the Chaco tribes, or a recorder of all he saw more perfectly exact, refers to the Abipones, a tribe with whom he passed a weary martyrdom, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, always refers to them as an equestrian nation. Not only did the Abipones, but the Lules, the Tobás,² the Lenguas, and the Guaycurús, become equestrian; so much so, that as both Dobrizhoffer and Lozano say, they hardly ever walked.

When Nuñez and his expedition had got across the river to the Chaco, they were met by a deputation of the chiefs of the Guaycurús. They came to see him and to fulfil a curious ceremony.

"The principal Indians came to tell the Governor³ that it was their custom when they went to war to make a present to the captain⁴ . . . and the Governor to please them accepted, and all the principal Indians one by one gave him an arrow and a finely painted bow, and after them all the other Indians brought him an

¹ "De Abiponibus."

² The writer has seen a Chaco Indian sitting immovable on a high bluff upon his horse, leaning on his spear, and contemplating a river steamer pass.

³ Nuñez, in his "Comentarios," always speaks of himself in the third person as the "Governor," probably because he was a gentleman and disliked to use "I" perpetually.

⁴ "Los Indios Principales vinieron a decir al Gobernador que era su costumbre cuando iban a alguna guerra, hacer un presente al capitán suyo . . . y el Gobernador por les hacer placer lo aceptó, y todos los Principales, uno a uno le dieron una flecha y un arco pintado muy galán, y tras de ellos todos los Indios cada uno truxo una flecha pintada y emplumada con plumas de Papagayos, y estuvieron en hacer dichos presentes hasta que fué de noche, y fué necesario quedarse allí en la Ribera del Rio a dormir aquella noche con buena guardia y centinela, que hicieron" (cap. xxi., p. 18).

arrow painted and plumed with parrot's feathers, and they were giving him these presents till about nightfall, so that it was necessary to remain there on the river bank to sleep that night, with a good guard and sentinels posted, which they did."

A curious scene it must have been, with the two vessels in which Nuñez had crossed the river with his men anchored in the stream, or fastened to a tree; the horses picketed under the trees and feeding, probably, on the leaves of a palm known as *Pindó* in Paraguay, for it would have been unwise to turn them out to grass. The Spaniards most likely in that climate used no tents, but bivouacked about their fires, whose light now and then must have revealed Indians gliding noiselessly about, just out of crossbow range.

The ceremony, strange as it was, showed that the Indians had an idea of chivalry. Next morning, war was formally declared and Nuñez took the field with a detachment of his men, some of his invaluable horses, and a contingent of the Guaranis, that he says numbered many thousand men.¹ This Guaraní contingent must have presented a remarkable appearance as described by Nuñez, for "they were all formed into squadrons, in good order . . . it was a sight to see how they were all painted with yellow ochre and with other colours, with strings of white beads around their necks, and plumes of feathers² and plates of copper that shone like the sun."

Their arms were clubs and bows and arrows, and they all marched in good array.

The country was full of game, but neither the

¹ These probably crossed in their canoes to attack their hereditary foes, for war was constant between them and the Guaycurús.

² "Era muy de ver como iban todos, pintados de Almagre y otros colores y con tantas cuentas blancas por los cuellos, y sus Penachos y con muchas planchas de cobre que como el Sol reververaba sus colores" (cap. xxii).

Spaniards nor their Indian allies dared hunt, for fear of falling into ambuscades.

One night a tiger ran through the Indians' camp, which caused a panic, and many of the Guaranis dispersed into the woods. As Nuñez was rallying them, somebody fired two shots at him with an arquebus that passed close to his head. He says that it seems probable enough, in the light of subsequent events, that they were fired on purpose, and most likely by one of Irala's partisans or by a friend of the officials whom he had disgraced.

However, this did not daunt him, and he plunged on foot into the woods, and after strenuous efforts calmed the Indians' fears and brought them back into the camp.

At eleven o'clock of the same night, the scouts brought tidings that they had found the camp of the Guaycurús.

Though Nuñez was afraid that the two shots had been heard, he at once set out for a surprise attack with all his soldiers and his Indians.

Well used to Indian warfare as he was, he ordered that the horses should be muzzled¹ so that they could not neigh.

This he did by the most original plan of stuffing all their mouths with grass above their bits.

It proved successful, and a charge of his men and muzzled horses scattered the Indians, though they resisted most tenaciously.

Although they had never seen horses before, or had the least idea such animals existed on the earth, the Guaycurús soon recovered from their fear.

A man was riding near the Governor upon a mare when suddenly an Indian leaped out of the grass and caught the mare so firmly round the neck, stabbing her

¹ "Mandó que hinchiesen a los caballos las bocas de yierva sobre los frenos, porque no pudiesen relinchar."

at the same time with three arrows that he carried in his hand, that he could not be forced away until he was killed. On their return towards the river the horsemen chased and speared a quantity of deer.

This feat is also mentioned by Bernal Diaz del Castillo during the conquest of Mexico. The deer in those days must have been, and very likely were, far tamer than to-day.

After his victory Nuñez returned in triumph to Asuncion with many prisoners. One of these he sent to summon all the chiefs of the Guaycurús and made them swear a peace with the Guaranis. This done, he set at liberty all the prisoners.

By this proceeding he must have raised up many enemies, for the old soldiers of the Schmidel class would have kept all for slaves. His victory and his judicious treatment of the Indians endeared him to the poorer Spaniards; but the old colonists and all the rich were bitterly incensed against him, and though not strong enough to break into revolt, they patiently waited for a favourable chance to do him injury.

Having made peace with the Chaco Indians, Nuñez next turned his attention to a matter of the first importance for the rising colony.

He states expressly in his "Comentarios" that, seeing there was need of help in Buenos Aires for the few Spaniards who had remained, he sent Captain Gonzalo de Mendoza with two vessels full of provisions and one hundred men, to provision and assist the half-deserted place.

Then he convoked the notables of Asuncion to a council to discuss the advisability of fitting out an expedition to explore the upper waters of the Paraguay. All were agreed that it was of the first importance and should be done forthwith.

Therefore the Governor at once despatched an expedition under Domingo de Irala, whom he had appointed his Lieutenant-General.

Irala set out on November 20th, 1544, with three small vessels all packed full of men to ascend the river and ascertain its source. With the expedition went three Spaniards as forerunners with eight hundred Guaranis. These quarrelled by the way, and in some twenty days returned to Asuncion.

In spite of this, Domingo de Irala still kept on, fighting against the stream, for he was one of those who, having once embarked upon a course, pursued it to the end, like a true Basque.

About this time Pedro de Estopiñan Cabeça de Vaca came back to Asuncion, after assisting the people left in the island of Santa Catalina by the Governor. He took off such of them as were recovered from their sickness and then set sail for Buenos Aires.

He found the place deserted¹ and a high pole set up on the river bank, with an inscription carved upon it. The inscription ran,—“Here is a letter.”

He dug at the foot of the pole and found the letter.

It proved to be from Domingo de Irala and Antonio de Alvar, who said they had taken off all the inhabitants and had gone to Asuncion.

So the two captains, Estopiñan Cabeça de Vaca and Gonzalo de Mendoza, also returned there.

The effects of the conciliatory policy of Nuñez soon made itself felt amongst the Guaranis.

A number of their chiefs appeared spontaneously in

¹ This would seem to explain the difference of opinion between the historian Herrera, Father del Techo, and the other writers (see p. 121, cap. vi.).

It is not improbable that Nuñez despatched a vessel to Buenos Aires, ignorant of the fact that it was deserted.

It is, however, quite evident that he did not refund it. That honour was reserved for Don Juan Garay in 1588.

Asuncion to tender fealty to him. Already they had taken Spanish names as Juan de Salazar Caprioti, Lorenço Moquiaco, and Gonçalo Maygurari, and spoke the language pretty well.

Difficulties were thickening around Nuñez, and opposition to his rule was being assiduously fostered by Irala's agents and his friends.

Nuñez had hoped to conciliate him by treating him with great consideration and making him his Lieutenant-General. This line of conduct might have succeeded with a more generous nature; but it failed entirely with the dour Biscayan, who lost no opportunity of strengthening himself against the Governor, although he never showed his hand.

For all that, and notwithstanding his entire absence of generosity and complete failure to comprehend the liberal views of Nuñez, he was an enterprising man, uninfluenced by greed, a first-rate officer, and an explorer of immense tenacity.

On his return from Buenos Aires, Gonzalo de Mendoza had been sent with three small vessels to buy provisions for Irala's expedition up the Paraguay. When he arrived at a little port known as Giguy, the Indians refused to sell him anything, and then attacked his ships. He wrote to Nuñez to send him help, and for provisions, for his own were running short.

Nuñez convoked a council of the clergy, who seem to have been already numerous in Paraguay, and asked for their advice.

They all agreed that Irala should be sent to the assistance of Mendoza and his men.

Nuñez laid strict injunctions on him, such as most probably were never laid on any captain in the conquest of the Americas, either the north or south.

He was to call the Indians to obedience and to remind them that they had promised their allegiance

to the Emperor. He might as well have tried to call a pack of wolves up with a dog-whistle, but the intention shows the spirit of the man.

The Indians were to be exhorted once, and twice, and three times, and then war was to be made on them, so as to do them as little harm as possible. As few of the Indians were to be killed as possible,¹ all plundering was prohibited, and all the time they should be pressed to leave off warfare and return to the peace and friendship that they had formerly professed.

Nuñez was indeed a man born long before his time, and, naturally enough, misunderstood by everyone.

All these pacific and philanthropic ideas only served to make him more and more hated by the colonists and to increase Irala's faction in numbers and in strength.

Nuñez must have had the first intimation as to how things stood by an incident that now occurred. News was brought to him that the two friars, Armenta and Lebrón, who had already given him trouble on his first landing, had set out back again to Santa Catalina, intending to return to Spain. Their intention was to see the Emperor and to complain of the bad government in Paraguay, for they alleged that Nuñez vexed the colonists with harsh and foolish regulations as to the Indians.

Those vexatious regulations were, of course, the line of conduct that he pursued and had enjoined on all the colonists to treat the Indians well.

Unluckily for them, the two "religious" had carried off by force some Indian girls, to make them, as they said, good Christians.

¹ "Y quando siendo asi requeridos y amonestados, una y dos y tres veces, y quantas mas, debiesen y pudiesen con el menor daño que pudiesen los hiciesen la guerra excusando muertes y robos y otros males y les constriñesen apretandoles para dexasen la guerra y tornasen a la paz y amistad que antes solian tener y lo procurase por todas las vias que pudiese" (cap. xii., p. 32).

The chiefs complained to Nuñez that some thirty Indian girls were missing, and they suspected that the two holy men knew of their whereabouts.

Nuñez at once sent soldiers after the absconding friars, and found their camp was full of Indian girls. These he released and brought back again, and then restored them to their families.

Disquieted at the friars' conduct, he wrote to Spain asking for advice, for he was chary of a quarrel with the Church. All this but served to fan the fire of his unpopularity, for probably enough most of the colonists saw nothing worthy of much reprobation in the proceeding of the friars.

Irala by this time had returned from his expedition up the river, having got as far as the little port of Reyes, and gleaned some tidings from the Indians that further on there was a country where the people had much gold. He brought back with him a few plates of beaten gold. That was enough to raise the hopes of everyone, for they were unaware that all the precious metals that the Indians possessed must have come from Peru.

Nuñez, on hearing the report of all Irala had seen up the river, determined to set out himself on an exploring expedition.

By this time he seems to have been well aware that he must be upon his guard, so after having named Juan Salazar de Espinosa to the command in Asuncion during his absence, he set out up the river in 1545, taking Irala, Caceres, and Dorantes, in fact all those he knew were disaffected to him, so as to keep them under his own eye.

The expedition numbered four hundred Spaniards and about two hundred Indians, the most of whom went in the fleet, whilst the rest marched along the bank.

CHAPTER VIII

IN the various expeditions up the Paraguay of Captains Hernando de Ribera, Gonzalo de Mendoza, and Irala, much had been learned about the geography of the country and of the Indian tribes.

It was reserved for two men, differing so widely in their characters and education as were Alvar Nuñez and Hulderico Schmidel, alone of the first navigators to write about the flora and the fauna, and to set down those curious and intimate details of their lives that as a rule are so completely wanting in the early writers on the River Plate.

In Mexico and in Peru and in Colombia it was otherwise; but then those countries, luckily for them, had gifted writers such as Fray Simon,¹ Bernal Diaz del Castillo, and Pedro Cieza de Leon.

These men, whilst not neglecting the greater episodes of the conquest, yet abound in all those intimate and curious details that remove history from the sphere of a mere mental exercise, or of long dissertations on motives and on character, seen more or less through the wrong end of a telescope, and render it a human document.

The expedition arrived safely at the port of Itapitan without adventure. In fact, for those days, it seemed

¹ Fray Pedro Simon, "Noticias Historiales de las Conquistas de Tierra Firme." Cuenca, 1627.

Bernal Diaz del Castillo, "Historia de la Conquista de la Nueva España," 1632.

Pedro Cieza de Leon, "La Cronica del Peru." Amberes, 1554.

more like a pleasure cruise than, as it really was, a jump into the unknown, for Irala's expedition had not been very rich in information except as regards the reports that he brought back as to the gold and silver plates the Indians possessed.

Núñez informs us that as his horses all were fat and in good condition, on several occasions they landed them and went out hunting, for there were many deer, tapirs, and other animals.¹

Hulderico Schmidel went with the expedition up the Paraguay, and from the first he showed his animus against his general.

It is curious to read his description of the various animals beside those written by Núñez, for they appear the product of a different age, though, of course, Schmidel was a man of little education.

He tells of a strange animal that he calls "el cocodrilo,"² whose tail is a most delicious meat.³ The only way to kill this beast is to hold a looking-glass before his eyes,⁴ and when he sees himself he dies.

Núñez gives an interesting description of the capibara, the largest of the rodents, that is known in Argentina as the carpinicho.

"They have," he says, "a blunt nose, and are longer than the swine of Spain . . . by night they live on land, and by day are always in the water, and when they see people they dive into the river . . . when they rise again they are a crossbow shot from where they dived."

¹ "Los caballos iban gordos y muchos días, los sacaban en tierra a cazar y montear con ellos, porque havia muchos venados y dantas y otros animales" ("Comentarios," cap. xviii., p. 36).

² The alligator.

³ "Delicioso manjar" (cap. xxxv.). Those who have eaten it will hardly bear him out in his opinion.

⁴ "Es el unico medio de matarle, ponerle delante un espejo, en que viendose, muere."

In all such matters Nuñez was a painstaking and an accurate observer, as is to be seen in his most curious description of the vampire bat, perhaps the first recorded by any of the conquerors.

"These bats," he says, "are a bad kind of vermin, and there are many of them on the river [Paraguay], and they are about the size of turtle-doves,¹ and they cut so softly with their teeth, that he whom they bite does not feel it, and they only bite men on the fleshy part of the toes, or on the feet, or on the point of the nose.

"They² only bite those they have bitten once; although there may be many others, they do not bite them, but only him on whom they have commenced.

"We have to take care to defend the horses' ears from them, for they are very fond of biting them."

Nuñez observes that when the bats enter a stable and bite a horse, the other horses make such a noise that people have to go and drive the bats away. In this he would appear to be mistaken, for generally horses in Paraguay are as insensible to their bites as men.

Nuñez was no exception, for a bat bit him on the foot as he lay sleeping in a vessel on the Paraguay, and he woke up in the morning with the sheets bathed in blood.

So he went on up the river, noticing now the "sting-

¹ It is to be remembered that there is a very small variety of the turtle-dove often to be met with in Spain and North Africa.

² "Estos morcielagos son una mala sabandija, y hay muchos por el rio (Paraguay) y que son tamaños y mayores que tortolas de esta tierra, y cortan tan dulcemente con los dientes, que al que muerde no lo siente y nunca muerden al hombre sino en las lumbres de los dedos de los pies, ó en el pico de la nariz . . . y al que una nez muerde aunque haya muchos otros no muerden sino al que començo a morder . . . tenemos que hacer (cuidado?) en defenderle las orejas de los caballos; son muy amigos de ir, a morder en ellas" (cap. liv., p. 42).

ing rayfish"; now that nearly all the wild fruits of the country were safe to eat, except one like a myrtle,¹ that caused purging and vomiting, although quite pleasant to the taste.

All of his actions were most unlike those of the ordinary conquistador, with his thoughts fixed on the discovery of gold, and the conversion of the Indians to "our holy faith." Certainly he had a wondrous world for an observant conqueror to travel in, where all was strange—fruit, animals, birds, fish, and even man. His simple observations may now be labelled crude; but so are those of him who first rubbed amber and noted it attracted straws.

As he advanced, fighting his way up the Paraguay and gradually entering a hotter and less healthy climate, his men began to suffer greatly both from the heat, the want of food they were accustomed to, and the attacks of the myriads of insects with which the Paraguay abounds, and discontent was rife amongst them.

Núñez, who, like the other conquistadores, always hoped to come on some great Indian city, pushed resolutely on, counting the hardships as nothing in comparison with those he had endured in Florida.

Cortés, Pizarro, or Quesada, at the first signs of discontent amongst the soldiers, would have hung one or two of them, and they would have given in and shown him all respect, for above all things the Spaniards of those days respected firmness, even if tempered with brutality.

Núñez, who first and foremost was a humane and tender-hearted man, took no such measures, and it is probable his men took his humanity for lack of character.

¹ "Uno, de estos arboles que naturalmente parecen arrayanes, y la fruta de la misma manera que la hecha el Arrayan (que se dice murta) . . . de muy buen sabor" (cap. lxi., p. 49).



INDIAN MAN AND WOMAN.

From Huldérico Schmitt's Book.

At last the expedition reached El Puerto de los Reyes, a little port upon the Paraguay that had been visited by Irala, and at first sight seemed to the soldiers a terrestrial paradise. The Indians were agriculturists, who received them kindly and brought provisions in abundance to them.

They were now in the territory of the Guaxaropos,¹ who were a peaceful agricultural race.

Still further on lived Los Orejones, whose chieftain had a "palace" in the Laguna de los Xarayes, a great marsh now in Brazilian territory. The chieftain's "palace" was in an island in the middle of the marsh.

After having taken council with his officers and with the clergy who accompanied the expedition, Nuñez determined to send an embassy to visit the great chief.

He chose two men on whom he could rely, Anton Correa and Hector de Acuña, and sent them off accompanied by Indian guides. Hardly had they started on their embassy than discontent again broke out amongst the soldiers, for they knew that Nuñez had determined to push on to gain the frontiers of Peru. The veterans, seeing the soil was fertile and the Indians friendly, wished to settle there, saying with a show of reason that it seemed not worth while to waste the remainder of their lives, in exploring deserts and suffering hardships, that never seemed to end.

"Let," they said, "the younger men go on and look for gold; we will stay here and settle down." Perhaps they had an eye upon the handsome undraped women of whom Schmidel speaks with so much unction.

They had not got to actual mutiny, but sent a depu-

¹ Hulderico Schmidel calls them "Bascheropos," and says their women were handsome and went naked: "Son hermosas y andan desnudas" (cap. xxxiv., p. 14).

It is a most soldier-like observation, and proves that he, as well as his commander, took note of natural objects.

tation to see Nuñez, and to expound their views. He answered them,¹ "Are these Spaniards that I hear speak in such a fashion? Have we left Spain, our fathers and our friends, to look for lands in which to pass a life of ease? . . . I know my duty and yours also; it is for me to set the example, yours to follow if you are worthy of the name you bear."

This reasoning seems to have calmed them for the time, although the methods of the sterner conquerors would probably have proved more efficacious and more consistent with the times.

Correa and Acuña with their Indians had set out on their quest.

For days they struggled through the swamps, in water to the waist. At times they forced their way through cane-brakes, and at others plodded on wearily in the marsh, a prey to insects, to vampire bats, and all the plagues that render life almost unbearable in that latitude. Provisions were very scarce, game scarcer; but still they persevered, and in eight days returned to Reyes to report what they had seen.

Their sufferings had been immense upon their journey, and the report they brought satisfied Nuñez that it would be worth while to open up communications with the chief.

He wished at once to set off with a picked force of men; but all his officers and the clergy represented that the risk would be too great, and pointed out that hardships and disease were daily carrying off the soldiers, and that to plunge them once again into a lengthy expedition would but court mutiny.

Sadly he gave the order to return to El Puerto de los Reyes, with feelings easy to be imagined, for he had set his heart on opening up communications with

¹ "Ensayo de la Historia Civil del Paraguay," etc. (Dean Funes, cap. viii., p. 87).

Peru, or at least on discovering some great Indian empire or country rich in gold. Knowing his countrymen of those days, as he must have done, he knew that the Governor who could send no gold to Spain would soon either be superseded or would fall into neglect.

However, there was one man in the host of the true breed of the conquistadores. This was Captain Francisco de Ribera, who volunteered, with six companions and eleven Indians and an Indian guide, to push on boldly into the wilds to the territory of the great chief of the Xarayes in the island on the marsh.

Nuñez, who, had he been a simple captain, would have gone himself, sorrowfully returned to Reyes; but from that little port he sent out Captains Gonzalo de Mendoza and Hernando de Ribera to supplement the efforts of Francisco de Ribera, who had set out by land.

The two captains were, if possible, to reach the dwelling-place of the great chief of the Xarayes, about whom Nuñez had received many and much exaggerated reports from friendly Indians.

On January 20th, 1544, Captain Francisco de Ribera returned to Reyes, where Nuñez was expecting him with great anxiety. He had had a most adventurous journey, during which he had lost all his Indians; but he too had failed to reach the mysterious chief in his island on the marsh.

Thus the only people who had seen the chief, and could furnish any definite account of him and the strange people that he ruled over, were the two Spaniards of the first embassy that Nuñez sent, Anton Correa and Hector de Acuña. They, though the report they brought was highly coloured, still had reached Los Xarayes and had been received by the great chief. When, after struggling through the woods and marshes, they appeared before what they styled the "city," five hundred Indians came out to meet them

with crowns of feathers on their heads and strings of beads about their necks.

Some of the women wore white cotton robes that reached down to their ankles and left their shoulders bare. These were the "tupois" still worn by Paraguayan women in the country districts.

The chief received the ambassadors seated in a cotton hammock¹ and with a bodyguard of warriors. After having greeted the two Spaniards with "great courtesy," he had wooden stools brought out for them to sit upon.

Through an interpreter they explained their mission. It then appeared the chief was anxious to be friends with Alvar Nuñez, for he maintained continual warfare with the Guaranis.

After a long interview, he presented them with ample provisions and made a feast for them.

He sent woven cotton hammocks for them to sleep in, and asked if they would like an Indian girl² for each of them, for if they wished he would send two at once.

They thanked him, but excused themselves, saying they were worn out with travelling.

Next day they were awakened by the noise of drums and war whistles, and found a regiment of Indians painted and armed for war.

The chief, after the fashion of the most Catholic and Christian kings and of our presidents of later days, wished to celebrate the great event with a review.

Proudly he said, "Christians, look at my people; this is the style in which they take the field against the Guaranis." He not unnaturally thought the occasion propitious for an expedition in which the Christians should join.

¹ Like a Paraguayan villager might do even to-day.

² "Les combidó que si quisiese cada uno su moça, que se le darian, pero no las quiesesen diciendo que venian cansados" (cap. lix., p. 47).

However, once again they excused themselves, perhaps as in the matter of the "moças," by saying they were tired, and above all things not wishing to embroil themselves with the friendly Guaranis. These Indians were semi-civilized, all lived in houses of a kind and cultivated land, and all raised hens and ducks.

Out of the report of the two ambassadors and that of Captain Hernando de Ribera, who in his brigantine "El Golondrino" also reached Los Xarayes in 1544, after the return of the ambassadors, grew up the legend of "La Isla del Paraíso,"¹ a lesser sort of El Dorado, that for a long time haunted the imagination of the conquerors. The inhabitants of the Xarayes were known as Orejones;² and the tale ran that the size of their ears showed their descent from the Inca families of Peru, who also artificially enlarged their ears.

Schmidel went with Hernando de Ribera's expedition, and relates some curious particulars.

He says the king—that is, the cacique—asked our captain what we were seeking for. The captain answered, gold or silver, and then the king gave him a crown of silver and a plate of gold, and told him that they were the spoils of a valiant race of women called the Amazons.³

The gold and silver almost certainly was obtained from the Indians of Peru, for none has ever been found

¹ Padre Lozano, in his "Gran Chaco, Gualamba," etc., says that "el Padre Sanchez, que salio hasta Corazon de Jesus," could not find "La Isla del Paraíso," and thought it only existed "en los mapas de los geografos."

The geographers of those days were an imaginative race, and posterity is greatly in their debt.

² Great ears, for they distended them with blocks of wood.

³ Fray Martin de Sarmiento, in his "Demonstracion Critica Apologética," says that this mention of the Amazons by Schmidel is anterior to that by Orellana in his voyage down the Amazon. It was a belief that died as hard as did Manoa, El Dorado, or La Ciudad de los Cesares, amongst the conquistadores.

near La Laguna de los Xarayes. Schmidel's rough narrative agrees in all particulars with the more cultured "Relacion" of Hernando de Ribera, who styles himself "a conqueror in that province."¹

Rui Diaz de Guzman talks of a monstrous serpent² in the Xarayes that the Indians fed with the flesh of captives taken in their wars. The soldiers shot it, and the Indians broke out into loud lamentations, saying the serpent was their god.

Nuñez was all this time waiting in the port of Reyes, suffering himself with fever, and with his soldiers decimated by disease and every day more clamorous to return to Asuncion.

In spite of all his efforts, Nuñez was obliged to yield and gave the order to return. It must have cut him to the soul to go back without having accomplished anything, but the exploration of the River Paraguay.

Had but his officers been loyal to him, he might have rested at the port of Reyes till reinforcements and provisions came from Asuncion, and then pursued his journey to the frontiers of Peru. However, the chief opposition came from above, especially from Felipe de Caceres,³ one of the crown officials, who detested Nuñez after a quarrel that they had at a council meeting.

¹ "Conquistador en esta provincia." Ribera's "Relacion," a most curious document, is appended to the "Commentaries" of Alvar Nuñez, in Barcia's Collection, "Historiadores Primitivos de Indias."

² "Era muy gruesa y llena de escamas, la cabeza muy chata y grande, con disformes colmillos, los ojos muy pequeños tan encendidos que parecian centellear" ("La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman).

³ "Quien mas atizaba el fuego contra El Adelantado era Felipe de Caceres, hombre sedicioso, altivo y amigo de novedades, al cual le nació esta enemiga de que en cierta consulta el Adelantado se habia disputado con el y habládole con desabrimiento por haberle el ocasionado, y fue de manera que lo que se alargó con el adelantado que obligó a su sobrino Alonso Riqueme (de Guzman) a que le diera una puñalada."

What probably put the last touch to his unpopularity was a measure he was obliged to take before he gave the order to embark downstream again.

It was high time he took the resolution, for provisions were very scarce and game exhausted near the port; the rainy season, too, was coming on, that turns that part of the Chaco into a great lake, and the country, always unhealthy, then becomes doubly so.

Just as he was about to sail, he found his officers had collected nearly a hundred Indian girls who had been given to them by the chiefs.

Nuñez at once commanded all his officers to send the girls back to their families. This, he says, gave great satisfaction to the Indians, so it is to be supposed that the word "given" was a euphemism. Upon the other hand, the soldiers were all furious, and, as he says, "from that time I was hated¹ by the most of them and for that reason they did what I shall tell."

That he was right in his conjecture is amply proved by a passage in the narrative of Schmidel, who gives his own view of the transaction in terms one might expect:

"He took away from us by force all that we had gained² in the expedition."

Schmidel omits to say that all that anybody could have gained were slaves, for with the exception of the silver crown and the gold plates, given by the chief at Los Xarayes to Captain Hernando de Ribera, there was nothing else to gain upon the expedition but a few cotton cloths and furs.

Schmidel makes it appear that Nuñez took away the soldiers' "property" for himself, and omits to say that

¹ "Desde entonces fui aborrecido de los mas de ellos, y con aquella color y racon hicieron lo que diré" (cap. lxxiii., p. 57).

² "Nos quitó por fuerça quanto en la jornada haviamos ganado" (Hulderico Schmidel, cap. xxxviii., p. 17).

the girls were returned to their parents. How false is the colouring Schmidel gives to the transaction appears by a paragraph in "La Argentina," whose author, Rui Diaz de Guzman, stands high for his veracity. He says the Governor, to placate the soldiers, promised to pay them for their losses out of his own purse.¹

It is quite possible, as Schmidel says, that "the people did not love him (the Governor), . . . and even had he died we would not have cared a straw."

That is most likely, for had not Nuñez been the general the expedition would have returned with a whole drove of slaves.

On May 8th, 1544, Nuñez returned to Asuncion, so weak with fever that he had to be carried to his house.

Most of the soldiers were suffering from malarious fevers and from the hardships they had passed through upon the River Paraguay.

The Governor's long absence had given every opportunity for Irala to intrigue.

Moreover, Nuñez was angry with him for having allowed the port of Buenos Aires to be abandoned against² the interest both of God and of the king, and charged him roundly with his neglect.

Nuñez perceived that a new colony placed a thousand miles upstream could never flourish without a port by means of which to keep touch with the mother country and to receive supplies.

Irala, who had no large views, wanted upon the other hand to make himself as free of Spain as possible, for he was well aware that the Emperor was sure to send a Governor, even if Nuñez were removed. Other ambitious men in Mexico and in Peru had golden

¹ "La Argentina," p. 71.

² "Contra el servicio de Dios y de su Majestad."

arguments at their command that counted even with the Emperor; but Paraguay was not a country rich in gold or silver, and it was gold and silver that alone influenced the Emperor, for he was always short of money for his Italian wars.

Núñez brought back no treasure, and had prevented anyone from bringing slaves, so that his expedition seemed a failure to the colonists, who could not enter into his liberal views.

No doubt had he had time he would have endeavoured, on the one hand, to settle Paraguay with Spaniards, and on the other, to refound Buenos Aires, so by degrees to bring the country to a more prosperous state. It sadly stood in need of quiet and good government, for faction raged in Asuncion, and hostile Indians menaced the young colony on every side.

The poorer Spaniards and all the Indians loved and respected Núñez, but he was hated by the crown officials and the soldiery. His failure to bring treasure, and his ill-health, played into the hands of all his enemies, and in a few days after his arrival caused his ruin and his fall.

CHAPTER IX

THE storm that had been so long brewing broke on Nuñez almost immediately on his return to Asuncion.

The hardships he had endured upon the expedition, and the attack of fever he was suffering from, confined him to his bed. This was the opportunity. The crown officials, the older soldiers such as Schmidel, who thought themselves unjustly treated, even defrauded, by being deprived of all the captives they had made, hated the Governor most bitterly.

Irala was too prudent to appear openly, yet was determined to supplant Nuñez by all means in his power.

So, though he kept carefully aloof, making a "merchant's ears,"¹ as runs the Spanish proverb—that is, not hearing what he did not want to hear—yet he did nothing to check the conspiring, of which he must have known.

Upon St. Mark's Day (April 25th) the crown officials and the malcontents met privately, although Irala was not present at the meeting, having gone prudently away to his estate.

The success of the conspiracy depended upon secrecy and instant action, for the poorer Spaniards, who had neither land nor slaves, the Indians and their chiefs, and all the most respectable of the colonists, were much attached to their good Governor.

The conspirators were well aware that if their plot got wind, all these would rally to the Governor's defence.

¹ "Hacer orejas de mercader."

So they agreed to spread abroad that Nuñez had a plan to confiscate all private property and hold it for himself. Nothing could well have been more monstrous to say of such a man, who upon all occasions had displayed such generosity and such complete contempt of wealth, and held almost an exaggerated love for justice and for equity.

However, as in all cases of the kind, some sort of rallying cry was necessary, for people in the mass are little prone to stop and reason upon abstract principles. The chief conspirators were those who from the first had been opposed to Nuñez, such as Alonso Cabrera, the inspector for the crown,¹ the treasurer, Felipe de Caceres, and one Garcia Vanegas, the assistant treasurer. Followed by ten or twelve of their faction, all fully armed, as they ran down the street they shouted "Liberty," a cry that has been raised a thousand times since the beginning of the world when men embark on any villainy.

In Asuncion it had the effect that the conspirators intended, and kept the honest, timid men at home, for fear they might be championing a bad cause if they came out to fight.

It naturally rallied to the faction all those who were discontented with the real liberty the Governor professed, making no difference between the Spaniards and the Indians. This, of course, was the crown of his offence, whilst the conspirators wanted but freedom to enslave.

At the hour² of the Ave Maria they rushed up to the house where Nuñez lay in bed, so ill that he could hardly move.

As in Pizarro's case when he was murdered, the

¹ El Veedor.

² "A hora del Ave Maria"—*i.e.*, just at sunset ("Comentarios," Alvar Nuñez).

Governor had no armed guards, for, like Pizarro, Nuñez was most popular with all the poorer citizens.

They dashed into the house and found the Governor in bed. Jaime de Resquin, one of the faction, put a crossbow, with a poisoned arrow¹ in it, to his breast.

Then in his shirt they dragged him, weak with fever, through the street, all shouting "Liberty," and telling him he was a tyrant and that he now should pay for all the injuries and harm that he had done to them. These were, of course, his not allowing them to make the Indians slaves.

To such of the law-abiding citizens as they met, they said they had arrested Nuñez, as they had learned he intended to take away all private property.

The citizens did not believe them, for they knew their Governor, and his respect for law.

No one was armed or ready, and the twelve well-armed men were unassailable.

Moreover, to the baser sort they said that all who joined them should share in everything the Governor possessed.

Then, sword in hand, they forced him into a little room, and after putting him in irons, set a strict guard upon him. Then they went to the houses of the Chief Justice and all the other crown officials who they knew were friends of Nuñez, and took them to the public prison, letting out a criminal condemned to death for murder. This man at once became one of their most convinced adherents, and from that time made himself conspicuous by yelling "Liberty."

After a triumphal passage through the streets they arrested everyone who would not join them, sharing out amongst themselves the Governor's possessions,

¹ "Con un aspon con yerva" (cap. lxxiv., p. 58).

Yerva, literally a herb, was often used in the sense of poison in those days.

as wine and arms, clothes, books, ten ships he had upon the river, and a hundred thousand crowns.¹ Then, flushed with money and with liberty, they all repaired to the house of Domingo de Irala, and hailed him Governor and Captain-General.

As the conspirators well knew that the majority were friends of Nuñez, they set four guards upon him to watch him with drawn daggers, giving them orders to despatch him instantly at the first signs of any rescue from the town.

As he himself sets down, at this time Nuñez was very ill in bed and very weak,² but for his health's sake he had a first-rate pair of irons on his feet, and at the bed's head was a lighted candle, for the prison was so dark no ray from heaven reached it, and so damp the grass grew underneath the bed.

The captain of the guard was one Hernando de Sosa, whom Nuñez had put in prison for maltreating Indians. This man sat with him night and day inside the prison. Outside a guard was set, who, as the Governor says "pawkily," "they paid out of my property for their services." In spite of these precautions, an Indian woman who came with his food brought him a letter from his friends, telling him everything that passed.

As the guards made her take off all her clothes, and shaved her head so that she should not hide a letter in her hair, it seemed impossible that she could bring a letter almost every day for a long period.

But she contrived to do it, holding the paper tied

¹ "Castellanos." This coin differed in value in the various Spanish possessions, but was usually about equal to a dollar.

² "En el tiempo que estas cosas pasaban el governador estaba malo en la cama y para la cura de su salud tenia unos muy buenos grillos a los pies, y a la cabecera una vela encendida, porque la prision estaba tan oscura, que no se parecia el cielo, y tan humeda que nascia la yerva" (cap. lxxvi., p. 61).

up in black thread between her great toe and the next, and so successfully that she was able to take communications out from Nuñez in sympathetic ink.

The way she managed it was to pretend to rub one leg against the other, as if to scratch it, and as she did so picked up the paper with her toes.

The conspirators suspected that there was leakage somewhere, and set four youths at different times to make love to the Indian woman, to worm the secret out. They knew, as Nuñez says, that Indian women are not too saving of their persons;¹ but for all that the pseudo-lovers never found out anything. Perhaps their love-making was not so ardent as it might have been had not the girl been shaved, or it may be that being shaved, she lost her strength like Samson, and love said nothing to her.

All the time Nuñez was in prison he never ceased demanding to be tried publicly, or to be sent to Spain to justify himself before the Emperor. His gaolers dared not try him in Asuncion, even had they wished to do so, for he was still beloved by everyone outside his prison walls. Moreover, there were two great difficulties in the way.

Firstly, on what charge was he to be tried? Even the faction could not have ventured to try a man appointed by the Emperor solely upon the charge that he had put down slavery.

In the second place, without regard to any form of law, they had deprived him of his property and shared it out amongst themselves. During his imprisonment, on several occasions the citizens had risen in revolt, demanding his release. All these revolts were put down with an iron hand; but still the people never long remained quiescent, or ceased their protests. One Pedro de Molina, a brave and honourable man,

¹ "No son escasas de sus personas."

risking his life and liberty, insisted on handing to Irala a written petition begging for the Governor's release. Naturally it had no effect.

All this time Irala kept himself sedulously in the background, and acted through the crown officials, the most of whom were enemies of Nuñez, and on the side of the new Governor. Nuñez neither charges Irala with cruelty nor robbery, but he was well aware that he was the prime mover of the conspiracy. Rui Diaz de Guzman says when the plot broke out Irala was not at Asuncion and had no notion any plot was being formed.

This seems a little strange, as Rui Diaz de Guzman was a close friend of Alvar Nuñez, and a strong partisan of law and order, and had a great respect for the home government.

In the absence of all authority, for Nuñez was in prison and Irala dared not show himself in Asuncion, although he had been nominated Governor by the conspirators, the country fell into confusion. Factions fought in the streets, some on the side of Nuñez and others on the side of the conspirators. Robbery was rife, and no one dared to leave the town unless well armed and with a guard of partisans. The Chaco Indians made incursions in their canoes across the river and murdered anybody they could find. Even the docile Guaranis began to think about revolt. At last things grew to such a desperate pitch that Irala and his faction, with a meanness almost incredible, were obliged to write to Nuñez in his prison to beg him to induce his adherents to accept the government in the interest of the State.

With true nobility of soul he did so, and instantly the country became quiet and fighting ceased, at least in Asuncion.

Even Irala now saw that there was no excuse for

refusing to send Nuñez back to Spain, especially as, when his property was stolen, all the reports he had prepared for the home government were carefully destroyed. These dealt with peculations by the crown officials, ill-treatment of the Indians and other matters of the kind. Thus the conspirators were certain that they would have the first word with the Emperor, even if Nuñez was returned.

A lengthy document had been prepared by them, in which they charged him both with oppression and with tyranny, though without any concrete instances, and this was ready to transmit to Spain.

In spite of every risk they ran, his friends contrived to put aboard the ship in which he was to go proofs of his innocence and testimony of his worth, and the esteem that he was held in by the majority.

When all was ready, after long delays and hesitations, for the conspirators were well aware their case was weak, and that once safe in Spain Nuñez would turn the tables on them, they took him to the ship. This they did secretly at night, for till the last they feared a rising in his favour.

Followed by a strong band of arquebusiers, Cabrera, Caceres, Dorantes, and Vanegas, his chief enemies, appeared before the prison gate. Nuñez was in bed, still ill with fever and in heavy irons, and quite unfit to walk. So two strong soldiers lifted him in their arms, almost at the point of death,¹ and carried or supported him into the open air. When he first saw the sky above his head, after so many months of semi-darkness, he revived a little. Then, struggling to his feet, he asked the soldiers to allow him to thank God for once more having let him see the heavens, after a year of chains. Falling upon his knees, he thanked God fervently, and when he rose the soldiers,

¹ "Casi con la vela en la mano."

moved to compassion by his piety, took him up in their arms and carried him towards the ship.

With the fresh air his indomitable spirit once more revived, in spite of all his sufferings, especially when at the place of embarkation he saw a knot of friends, for it had been impossible to keep the secret from the citizens. On seeing them, in a loud voice he said, "Friends, and you gentlemen, bear witness that I appoint as my lieutenant-governor, Juan de Salazar de Espinosa, and charge him for the king and for myself to rule the colony in justice and in peace until his Majesty provides."

He had hardly finished speaking when the treasurer, Garcia Vanegas, rushed at him with a dagger in his hand, and threatened him that if he spoke again about the king, he would drag¹ out his soul.

Not the least daunted by his violence, in a firm voice Nuñez repeated all that he had said, and Garcia Vanegas once more threatened him, wounding him slightly on the forehead with his dagger as he was being carried to the ship.

Once there, he was again put into heavy irons and chained down firmly to a ring-bolt secured into the deck.

Two days after Nuñez had sailed, Domingo de Irala at last showed his hand.

Accompanied by Felipe de Caceres, Pedro Dorantes, Nuflo de Chaves, and a band of the conspirators all fully armed, he went to the house of Captain Salazar, whom Nuñez had nominated his successor, and threw him into gaol. When Captain Salazar was taken, Irala then arrested Pedro de Estopiñan Cabeça de Vaca, a cousin² of the Governor, and under guard sent off both of them to overtake the ship in which

¹ "No creo en tal, si al rey mentais, sino os saco el alma."

² Some say a nephew.

Nuñez was a prisoner, for he intended to send them both to Spain.

The cook on board the vessel, one Machain, a Biscayan, Nuñez says, tried to poison him three times. Nuñez, however, like a prudent man, was luckily provided with a bottle of oil and a small piece of unicorn,¹ an animal that, though not very common in Paraguay, is sovereign against drugs.

Each night he drank some oil into which he first put a little of the unicorn.² This made him vomit all his food.

He then announced that he would starve himself to death unless they let a servant of his own prepare his food for him. This, after several days of fasting, seeing he was a man of resolution and quite determined, they were obliged to do.

When the ship got to La Isla de San Gabriel, in the estuary of the River Plate, they sent his servants back to Paraguay, after having made them row the whole way down the stream. No sooner had the vessel got to sea than she was caught in a pampero that put them all in danger of their lives.

Irala's officers who were on board, having been sent to accuse Nuñez when they arrived in Spain, were terrified and conscience-stricken.

Alonso de Cabrera, who had been the bitterest of all Nuñez's enemies, with his own hand filed off the fetters, and Garcia Vanegas kissed his feet with tears.

Four days the storm continued, and whilst it lasted all was contrition and abasement amongst his enemies. Beating their breasts they sought for his forgiveness, and begged his clemency when they arrived in Spain.

Short of provisions and of water, they put into the

¹ "Un pedazo de unicornio."

² Perhaps filings from some horn that a quack of those days had imposed on him, under the style and title of "Unicorn."

Azores. The storm was over and the danger passed, and as the saying is amongst the boatmen in the Bay of Naples, "The danger over, the saint¹ is put back in his cage."

The first act was to seek the Governor, for the Azores belonged to Portugal, and it would have been of no avail to talk of crimes against the Emperor.

They forged a story that Nuñez had a design to seize the Cape de Verde Islands, and make himself their king.

They advised the Governor, in the best interests of his king, to seize on Nuñez and send him prisoner to Lisbon by the first ship that passed.

Being a reasonable man, the Governor of the Azores laughed at their story, not understanding how Nuñez, still weak from fever and without a man at his command, could be a danger to his king.

When they arrived in Spain, Garcia Vanegas and Cabrera posted off to court to lay their charges against Nuñez before the Emperor.

No one believed them, for Nuñez was well known both to the Emperor and to his courtiers.

Quite in the Oriental style, accusers and accused were brought before the Emperor and told to state their case.

After a brief hearing, at which Nuñez produced the documents that his friends in Asuncion had hidden underneath the mast, helped by a carpenter who had taken charge of them, both parties were let out on bail, and for a season the whole matter was allowed to drop, after the Spanish style. Poetic justice followed hard upon the heels of all his enemies. Garcia Vanegas died suddenly. Cabrera, after going mad, murdered his wife, and perished miserably. The two friars, Armenta and Lebrón, who had preceded Nuñez to the

¹ "Passato il pericolo gabbiato il santo."

Spanish court with accusations framed against his rule, both died within the year.

All his accusers dead, the case dragged on for eight long years for lack of evidence. Then Nuñez was absolved of all the accusations brought against him and set at liberty.

Justice was satisfied, but equity, as often is the case, left unconsidered, for on one pretext or another his government was not restored to him. He says himself that he had no reward for all his services, and was not recompensed for all he had expended in the Emperor's affairs. This was the habit of the Emperor Charles V., who, by the valour of such men as Nuñez, Quesada, Pizarro, and Cortés, saw a great empire rise out of the sea to deck the Spanish crown without an effort of his own.

After so many voyages and such hairbreadth escapes by land and sea, so many hardships suffered with so great patience,¹ and such noble qualities of head and heart that he so lavishly bestowed on all with whom he came in contact, Nuñez appears to have come into a quiet harbour in his declining years.

Father del Techo says that Nuñez was awarded a pension of two thousand crowns,² and died in extreme old age at Seville, where he enjoyed a place in the Royal Council of the Indies.

Rui Diaz de Guzman says that Nuñez died "much honoured³ and with quiet of his person." The honour was his own by right of nature, and as to quietness of person, he had little during his eventful life.

By far the most humane, most liberal, and most

¹ Rui Diaz de Guzman says: "Padecia el buen Adelantado . . . muchas vejaciones y molestias, que le hacian con gran inhumanidad . . . lo cual todo pasaba con grandisima paciencia" ("La Argentina," p. 73).

² "Historia del Paraguay," Del Techo, Book I., cap. xiv.

³ "Con mucha honra y quietud de su persona."

far-seeing of any of the conquistadores, he had a virtue that was lacking to the greater portion of them, for he triumphed over self.

All of his actions and his sayings show his wide view of how a colony should be ruled. The Indians loved him and his poorer countrymen, and their love is¹ his best title to our own respect.

The one great figure in the history of the conquest of the River Plate, no one can read of all he underwent unmoved, or without murmuring to himself, "This was a man indeed."

All the chief writers on the conquest of the River Plate—Herrera, Rui Diaz de Guzman, Fathers del Techo, Charlevoix, and Lozano—speak of him in terms of eulogy. Father Guevara,² in his "Historia del Paraguay," says that Nuñez merited a statue for his uprightness, justice and Christianity, and in another place, "Florida held him in captivity with inhumanity. Asuncion³ infamously imprisoned him. In both places he gave an example of moderation, of rectitude, and prudence, and of a sound heart." Against all this testimony to his worth of educated men, there is but the dictum of Hulderico Schmidel on the other side.

Schmidel is evidently biassed, for his chief charge

¹ Martin Gonzalez, a priest and a contemporary of Nuñez, in a letter to the Emperor Charles V. dated June 25, 1556, at Asuncion, says that the sole crime Nuñez had committed was to protect the Indians.

Francisco de Villalta, also a contemporary, who has left a long and interesting account of Irala's expeditions, takes a contrary view. He says that "it was most expedient that Irala should be Governor instead of Nuñez," but he gives no reason why.

² "Historia del Paraguay," Guevara, Buenos Aires, 1836 (in "La Coleccion de Angelis"), Book VI., p. 108.

³ "Merecia estatua por su rectitud, justicia y Christiandad. . . . La Florida le cautivó con inhumanidad. La Asuncion le aprisionó con infamia, pero en una y otra parte fué ejemplo de moderacion, recto, prudente, y de sano corazon."

is that Nuñez treated the colonists with contempt, so that they, both nobles and plebeians, unanimously determined to send him to the king as a prisoner.

This charge against a man who was even too humane and too considerate, and who, moreover, was beloved by all the poorer Spaniards, reads ridiculously.

Schmidel's account of the raid on Alvar Nuñez when he lay sick in bed is very far from the true facts.

He makes no mention of the state Nuñez was in, and simply says, "They entered¹ his house upon St. Mark's Day . . . when he was off his guard."

His animus appears in all he writes, and arises probably from the time when at El Puerto de los Reyes he was obliged to set at liberty his captive Indians.

His testimony is of little weight against that of so many far more highly educated men, but has its interest as it gives a common soldier's view, who, as a mercenary, quite naturally looked on the Indians as fair game. Nuñez, like everyone who lives before his time, reaped in full measure all the dislike and enmity of the baser sort. He made himself a saviour and was crucified, as runs the Spanish saw. He has no statue, either in South America or Spain, though he deserves one more than many a conquistador who, glorious in bronze, lords it in market-place and square.

If some day, someone, either in Buenos Aires, Seville, or Asuncion, should raise his monument, Alonso de Ercilla has supplied the epigraph in the apt, bitter couplet in his "Araucana":

"El mas seguro don de la fortune
Es no la haber tenido vez alguna."

¹ " . . . y entraron en su casa el dia de San Marcos . . . Cuando menos lo receleba" (Hulderico Schmidel, cap. xl.).

CHAPTER X

Now that he had deported Alvar Nuñez, Irala boldly assumed the governorship. In fact, there was no one to contest it with him, for all the adherents of Nuñez had been got rid of, and the remote and distant situation of Asuncion made it improbable that it would be of great importance to the Spanish crown. Moreover, the Emperor and his government were only interested in colonies that sent home gold, and this was not to be expected from Asuncion. At first no one opposed Irala's assumption of the governorship except one or two relations of Alvar Nuñez who had remained behind, and they were driven from the town into the woods.

Irala's first act was to surround Asuncion with a palisade, a wise precaution, as the fierce Indians of the Chaco were always on the watch to raid the town. However, his position was not without its difficulties. The crown officials, Pedro Dorantes, and Felipe Caceres, although they had worked with Irala against Nuñez, still were not disposed to see all power pass into Irala's hands.

They raised a faction, and civil war was on the point of breaking out when a revolt of the subject Guaranis, who thought to profit by the dissensions of their conquerors, healed up the breach and forced the Spaniards to unite and at once take the field.

The Indians in great force were camped about three leagues from Asuncion, where Irala, at the head of three hundred and fifty Spaniards and a thousand

Indians whom he had induced to join him by promising them great rewards and privileges, at once attacked them. Although the Guaranis suffered severely from the Spanish musketry, they came on boldly, fresh men taking at once the place of those who fell. This was so unlike the usual conduct of the Guaranis in battle that the Spaniards were amazed. Surrounded by the Indians, after their ammunition was exhausted they had to struggle for three hours armed only with their swords and lances, until the Indian attack lost its ferocity. Then a charge home settled the fortune of the day.

More than two thousand Indians perished, but even yet there was much more to do. The beaten Indians retreated on a fortified position that they defended with so much tenacity that only after four days' siege Irala entered it. The fugitives retreated to another fort called Carieba, and although Irala had received reinforcements from Asuncion, the Indians fought so stubbornly that after a week's constant fighting he was about to raise the siege. Just at that moment, an Indian chief, who had had a quarrel with his fellows, volunteered to show a secret path into the place on the condition that the fort should not be burned. Irala kept his promise to the letter but broke it in the spirit, for upon entering the fort he put its brave defenders to the sword.

Too late, the traitor chief saw the kind of man he had to deal with, and broke out into rebellion to avenge his countrymen.

Irala, who had returned in triumph to Asuncion, instantly took the field again with a strong force, and fell upon the Guaranis at the fork of a river half a league from their town.

Flushed with their previous victories, his men made short work of the Indians, and once again Irala came

back to his capital in triumph with his position strengthened by success. Thus passed the year 1545 in operations that entirely broke the spirit of the Guaranis and left Irala free to prosecute his plan of finding out a way to the Peruvian mines. Still he was careful to consolidate his power.

What helped him greatly in this respect was the extreme isolation of the colony.

Schmidel, in a curious passage about the expedition of Irala up the Paraguay that set out in 1540 and returned in 1542, says, "Then we rested two whole years, without in all that time a single vessel coming to us from Spain."¹ This isolation, being as he was not only Governor, but Captain-General, gave Irala opportunity to gather all the threads of government into his hands. Moreover, as he was a bold and skilful leader and not too much encumbered with scruples as to slavery or plunder, although himself disinterested in money matters in the highest degree, no doubt his partisans enriched themselves and prospered under his government.

How much less far-seeing in his views he was than Alvar Nuñez is to be seen at once, by his having made no effort to refound Buenos Aires and to provide a port for the young colony.

Still he was not a man who could remain inactive, and if he left his soldiers idle there was the chance of mutiny, so that his expeditions to the Chaco and the interior of Paraguay were always going on.

Under his rule the condition of the Indians was daily growing worse. Not that he oppressed them personally for his own benefit; but being, as it were, a Governor on sufferance, he could not look too closely into such matters, or check the tyranny of his chief partisans.

¹ "Y descansamos dos años enteros, sin que en tanto tiempo viniere navio de España" (Hulderico Schmidel, cap. xlv.).

The abuses went so far that at last one Captain Camargo, touched by the sufferings of the hapless Guaranis, proposed to Irala that all the Indians should be shared out as serfs amongst the various landowners, thinking by that they would at least have some protection from their overlords.¹

The proposition had the merit of originality, and as originality is above all things what no person in authority can stand (or understand), it cost its author dear. On the pretext that he was stirring up revolt, Irala had him forthwith executed.

It is possible, of course, that Captain Camargo was involved in the affairs of Domingo de Alvar, who with the few remains of those who had been friends of Nuñez had taken to the woods. From the impenetrable depths of the primeval forests they for a long time set Irala at defiance, and to them gathered all who were discontented with his rule. They must have given him some trouble and forced him to look round at any cost for friends.

Herrera says, "In order to make friends, he (Irala) gave land in concession and fiefs of Indians to Portuguese, French, and Levantines; but at the same time prohibited that anyone should engage in any way in instituting what in those days was called 'Repartimientos' of the Indians."²

¹ "El Capitan Camargo procurador de la ciudad, tocado de tantos males. . . . Tuvo valor para proponer a Irala por remedio el repartimiento de los Indios esperando fuesen menos oprimidos a la sombra de protectores que los mirarian como propios" ("Ensayo de la Historia Civil del Paraguay," etc., Dean Funes, cap. xi., p. 127).

² "Que para ganar amigos, repartió la tierra y encomendó a los Indios a portugueses, franceses y levantiscos, y prohibiendo al mismo tiempo, que nadie tratase de repartimientos" ("Historia de la Indios," Herrera). The two systems of "Repartimientos" and "Encomiendas" were productive of great abuses, tyranny and oppression of the Indians.

An Encomienda was originally a military fief that carried certain privileges and duties with it. It was held from the crown, and granted

In 1546, a caravel arrived from Spain with orders from the king that no more discoveries were to be attempted in Paraguay until the matter of the government was settled. Irala saw his danger and did his best to stop the news from becoming public, determining at once to go upon an expedition of discovery, hoping by its success to make his peace at court. Leaving Francisco de Mendoza as his lieutenant-governor, Irala set off, towards the end of 1547, on his long-looked-for expedition to Peru. Hulderico Schmidel, who certainly was a stout soldier and an adventurous man, went with the expedition. His is the only contemporary account of this most interesting journey, one of the most adventurous of all the expeditions during the conquest of the River Plate.

Irala took with him three hundred Christians, amongst whom were over a hundred mounted men. After a march of six and thirty days they arrived at the territory of some Indians whom Schmidel calls Mapais. The women, he remarks, were ugly, and wore no clothes except a short petticoat.¹

Irala must have gone a long way up the Paraguay, for Schmidel mentions that the Mapais had llamas, animals that they could only have procured in Peru.²

These Indians attacked the expedition under the cover of the night, but were repulsed with loss.

To punish them Irala made a forced march at the head of one hundred and fifty arquebusiers with two thousand five hundred Guaranis, and fell upon the camp of the Mapais. Schmidel's account of the

to its holder the labour of the Indians on the land and the duty of teaching them the Christian religion, doctrine and precepts. A *Repartimiento* carried no such duties, and was practically a gift of the Indians to its holder as serfs. Both systems led to gross abuses.

¹ "Las Mujeres son feas, y desde la cintura a la rodilla traen un paño."

² Schmidel says that when he was ill, he rode forty leagues on a llama.

proceedings shows the difference between Irala and Nuñez very clearly indeed:

“On the third day we caught many Mapais with their wives and children in a wood; but they were not those we were looking for, but friends of theirs who had not the least idea we should attack them. Notwithstanding,¹ they paid for the culprits, for when we attacked them we killed many of them and captured about three hundred, including Indian women and their children.”

In a delightful passage he goes on to say, “Out of the spoil² I got nineteen Indians, men and women, not very old, and other things.”

What the other things consisted of he does not say; but the whole passage shows the spirit of the ordinary mercenary adventurer, and explains clearly the opposition Nuñez had to face.

Civilization, then as now, entered in with blood. Irala's passage up the Paraguay was marked with blood at every step, with outrages upon the Indians such as those Schmidel describes, with massacres and the enslavement of the wretched natives, whenever they were found. He himself was not worse than many another of the conquistadores and took no captives for himself, but was in fact a mediocre man, brave as his sword and unimaginative—and the first requisite for a conqueror is imagination. For want of it first fell mankind, and is still falling every day.

After they had conquered, cruel and bigoted as were both of them, Pizarro and Cortés endeavoured

¹ “Al tercer día cogimos en un Bosque muchos Mapais con sus Hijos y Mujeres, pero no eran los que buscábamos, sino amigos suyos que no tenían el menor recelo que íbamos a ellos, no obstante pagaron por los culpados, pues cuando dimos en ellos, matamos muchos y cautivamos con Indias y su hijos cerca de 300” (Hulderico Schmidel, cap. xlv.).

² “Pillé en el despojo diez y nueve Indios e Indias, no muy viejas, y otras cosas.”

to build up again. They both endeavoured to introduce what they considered the true faith. Both built fine churches and endowed convents, and both of them laid the foundations of great cities that still stand on the sites they chose.

Irala, though disinterested and brave, went through the country he invaded like a pestilence. He brought no single benefit to the Indians on the Upper Paraguay. He left so little trace of European culture that the tribes he fought with in the Chaco are to-day uncivilized, and but fifty years ago were as ferocious as when he passed amongst them like a scourge of God.

All his ambition, when he had once got himself nominated Governor, was to keep his place. He had a worthy chronicler of all his exploits in the materialistic, brave German soldier, who, naturally enough, saw in his leader his own qualities sublimated, and made a god of him, after the fashion most men make their gods.

However, of Irala's energy as an explorer there can be no doubt. He still pushed upwards till he arrived at the country of the Carios, whose territory lay round about the little port of La Candelaria.¹ Here he found that Juan de Ayolas had left three of his soldiers who had fallen ill. One was a trumpeter called Geronimo, and by an irony of fate the Indians had killed him only three days before the expedition reached the port.

They paid in blood² for the crime they had com-

¹ Father Charlevoix ("Histoire du Paraguay") places this port in latitude 20° south.

² "Pagaron bien esta maldad, pues estuvimos catorce dias en su pueblo . . . y averiguado que estaban en un bosque ibamos contra ellos, matamos muchos y cautivamos los demas" (Hulderico Schmidel).

The word "cautivar" was generally used in the sense of "made slaves of" in the records of the conquest.

The writer remembers talking to an old slave in Brazil, who always talked of himself as a "cautivo." He had, however, come from Africa in his youth.

mitted, to the full, for after having come upon the Indians in a wood, the Spaniards killed a great number of them and made slaves of the rest.

Irala remained for fourteen days in the village of these wretched Indians. With many soldiers of the type of Schmidel in his ranks, those fourteen days must have been a veritable Calvary to those whom the Spaniards primarily were there to teach the faith of Christ.

Irala, after dealing so faithfully with the Carios, pursued his memorable march until he came to a point that the "astronomers"¹ assured him was three hundred and seventy-two leagues from Asuncion.

He must have been either in Peruvian territory or very near it, for many of the Indians spoke quite creditable Spanish and had many European articles in their possession.

At this place, which Schmidel does not name,² Irala remained for twenty days, and in that time a letter reached him from the seat of government in Peru.

It proved to be from the celebrated Licentiate La Gasca,³ warning Irala not to enter Peruvian territory under pain of death.

¹ "Segun la cuenta de los astrónomos era 372 leguas del Asuncion" (Hulderico Schmidel).

Asuncion is a thousand miles from the mouth of the River Plate. Irala must have been above Cuyabá at the time. In the vessels of light draught that he possessed he might have gone at least another three hundred miles.

² Funes says that it was called "La Encomienda de Piransules" ("Ensayo de la Historia Civil del Paraguay," etc., Dean Funes, cap. xi., p. 12).

³ The Licentiate La Gasca was the churchman who was sent to hold the country for the crown during the rebellion of the Pizarros. He came without an army, and with nothing but the royal letters given him in Spain appointing him administrator of Peru. He raised an army, gathered a great party for the king, and finally defeated the Pizarros at the great battle of Sacsahuana. He was one of the great figures of the conquest, though personally harsh and unsympathetic.

Schmidel says that La Gasca was afraid Irala might have joined Gonzalo Pizarro in his rebellion, but this is a mistake, for Irala was on the confines of Peru in 1549, and Gonzalo Pizarro was executed in 1548.

Most probably La Gasca did not care to have a strong band of adventurers in his territory. In fact, Schmidel says this in the plainest of plain words, and even adds that if they had joined forces with Gonzalo Pizarro,¹ they would have without doubt² raised a sedition against the government. This frank declaration of Schmidel's shows the spirit that animated Irala's troops, and proves La Gasca acted prudently in stopping their advance towards Peru.

The German mercenary unveils his soul completely in the following curious commentary on La Gasca's letter to Irala, and shows how he distrusted all his officers:

"At last, La Gasca and our General agreed, and this one (Irala) was much contented with the great gifts he (La Gasca) sent him. Everything of which was done without the knowledge of the soldiers; had we but penetrated³ it we would have sent him to Peru, bound hand and foot."

Irala was now to find himself in an analogous position to that in which Alvar Nuñez had found himself, both in the port of Reyes and on his return to Asuncion.

Before Irala started on his homeward voyage, he sent the celebrated Captain Nuflo de Chaves with

¹ He did not know that Gonzalo Pizarro was already dead at the time he was writing.

² "Temia Gasca que si entremos en el Peru, y se movia alguna sedicion contra el, nos juntamos con los secuaces de Pizarro, que andaban huidos, como sin duda huviere sucedido si nos haviamos juntado" (Hulderico Schmidel, cap. xlviii., p. 25).

³ "En fin Gasca y el General se concertaron, quedando este muy contentos con las grandes dadivas que le embió, todo lo qual se hizo sin saberlo los Soldados, que si lo penetramos le hubieramos embiado al Peru atado de pies y manos."

four soldiers to La Gasca to settle matters as to his position as Governor of Paraguay.

Irala naturally was anxious to legitimize his status, and as La Gasca enjoyed great powers from the crown and was the Viceroy of Peru, on which at that time all the River Plate depended, he had the power of appointing governors. Nuflo de Chaves was the best choice as an ambassador Irala could have made.

A man of an old family and a son-in-law of Don Francisco de Mendoza, Chaves from the first had rallied to Irala against Nuñez. The soldiers all adored him, for he was one of those adventurous conquistadores whose names and whose achievements light up the history of the conquest of the New World, and make even the most prosaic and most prejudiced of readers give their admiration to them. Chaves and Belalcazar, Gonzalo Pizarro, with Pedro de Alvarado, were indeed not quite of the same calibre as Quesada, Pizarro, and Cortés, but their adventures were as strange as those of any of the greater leaders, and in every instance their fate was tragical.

Seeing his talents and his popularity, Irala made him his lieutenant, and he became his right-hand man and counsellor. More brilliant though less steady than Irala, Chaves was one of those certain to make his mark in times so troublous as those in which the rising colony of Paraguay now found itself. Boundless in ambition, and with the spirit of adventure common to all the Spanish conquerors developed to an extraordinary degree, he had his vision of an independent state, in which he was to rule.

This was the man Irala had selected to plead his cause before La Gasca, the Viceroy of Peru.

With his four soldiers Chaves started on his mission, leaving the torrid swamps and forests of the Upper Paraguay and entering the Andes in what is now Bolivia,

then known as Alto Peru, a region of high mountain passes and a cruel climate. He passed by Potosi, and after having rested for a week or so he came to Lima, a tremendous journey in those days. On his arrival in the capital, Chaves was well received. The Licentiate La Gasca, an ecclesiastic and a man of letters, was above all things a diplomatist. He listened carefully to all that Chaves had to tell him of the first unlucky settlement of Buenos Aires, of what happened in the case of Alvar Nuñez, of how the seat of government had been established in Asuncion, and of Irala's wish to be named Governor under the Spanish crown.

For several weeks Chaves and his four men remained in Lima, resting from their arduous journey over the mountains and entertained in semi-royal style.

La Gasca gave him no decisive answer, but with a gift of two thousand ducats, that Chaves shared out with his four companions, sent him back to Irala with a letter setting forth his commands.

He specially enjoined upon Irala, once more, not to advance into Peruvian territory, and not to rob or to ill-treat the Indians in La Encomienda de Piransules, where he was encamped.

His warning was not unnecessary, as it appears from Schmidel, who says, "We knew they (the Indians) had vessels¹ of silver, but as they were subjects of a Spaniard we did not dare to take anything from them."

Irala was so nervous that the letter from La Gasca might contain the news that someone had been appointed Governor of Paraguay over his head, that he had the bearer² of it kidnapped on the road.

¹ "Sabianos que tenian Vasos de Plata, pero porque estaban sujetos a Español, no nos atrevimos a quitarles nada."

La Encomienda de Piransules belonged to one Captain Pedro de Piransules. He was the feudal holder of the fief (encomienda), and this gave him the right to a certain number of days of the Indians' labour.

² Schmidel, cap. xxxviii., p. 26.

The soldiers and Schmidel with the rest were anxious to remain upon the frontiers of Peru. The country where they were encamped was fertile, the climate healthy, and in addition there was the magnet of the silver mines across¹ the frontier of Peru.

Irala, on the contrary, was most anxious to get back to Asuncion, where he had every reason to believe a party of the friends of Nuñez was making head against him. He too, like Nuñez in a similar position, must have regretted being obliged to give up his intention of opening up communications with Peru. In other respects also his position was like that of Nuñez. His hands were empty, troubles awaited him at home, and he now knew, since he was cut off from the Peruvian mines, that he must set to work to make the most he could of his own colony of Paraguay. Without the liberal views and the far-reaching grasp of what was requisite for a newly-founded colony, he seems to have wished to isolate himself as far as possible from Spain.

To make the parallel complete with Nuñez, he had to face a mutiny amongst the soldiers. This followed after a battle in which they had to fight severely against the Cercosis Indians, who barred their passage down the stream. The heavy fighting and the losses they incurred finished by disgusting all the soldiers with Irala. So they elected as their temporary chief captain Gonzalo de Mendoza. This captain at first loyally refused to go against his leader; but seeing that the whole expedition might disperse, or be attacked and fall into confusion, encumbered as they were by twelve thousand Indians whom they had enslaved, he reluctantly accepted, and with this enormous herd of slaves they set out homewards for Asuncion.

¹ Schmidel calls the country where they were "La Provincia de los Rachafies," a name that does full justice to his powers of invention.

It really was the country of the Sembicosis, a tribe that lived about the sources of the Madeira River that flows into the Amazon.

Irala, dragged along against his will, followed, a semi-captive of the host that he had led.

All the way down the Indians attacked the expedition, inflicting heavy losses on them, so that by the time they reached El Monte de San Fernando,¹ where they had left their ships, their plight was miserable.

Seeing their danger, and hearing of the troubles in Asuncion, the soldiers felt at once that Irala was the only man who yet could save them in their difficulties.

Once more he took command, and under his firm hand and great experience as a leader discipline was restored, and after eighteen months of absence they reached Asuncion.

All was confusion in the city, and the arrival of the unsuccessful expedition only made things worse. The measure of the success of any expedition in those days was the amount of gold or silver it brought back with it. Slaves were of value, but many of the conquistadores only looked forward to making a large fortune and then returning home. Slaves at the best could only be employed, in countries such as Paraguay, in agricultural labour, and agriculture was too slow a method of fortune-making for the majority of the conquerors.

Schmidel has left on record the sentiments of the average soldier in regard to the expedition and its results.

His comments on it are in a vein of cynicism, usual enough with him, but on the whole illuminating, as they show plainly why Alvar Nuñez was unpopular.

"We captured² twelve thousand Indians," he says, "and made them work for us as slaves, and I myself had fifty of them."

¹ This place must have been somewhere in the neighbourhood of La Laguna de los Xarayes.

² A different state of things from the return of Alvar Nuñez without a single slave.

CHAPTER XI

THE situation in Asuncion called for the strong hand of Irala to dominate it.

Francisco de Mendoza, whom Irala had made his lieutenant-governor during his absence, had rebelled against him.

The partisans of Alvar Nuñez, under Don Diego de Abréu, who had been outlawed from the city, had gathered strength, and civil war had broken out between the opposing factions, after an appeal to the suffrage of the citizens, in which Abréu gained the day.

Having been elected Governor of Paraguay, he instantly despatched a caravel to Spain to seek for confirmation in his position from the crown. Mendoza, who had been taken by surprise and thought himself secure of his election, plotted to seize his rival; but Abréu, hearing of his plan, instantly set out at the head of a band of his own followers, besieged Mendoza in his house, took him prisoner, and then without the shadow of a trial at once beheaded him. Upon the scaffold Mendoza confessed that years ago in Spain he had killed his wife, her servants, and her chaplain in a fit of jealousy. The people saw in his execution a celestial judgment on him for his crime, and he himself, one hour before his death, married his mistress, Doña Maria de Angulo, to legitimize four children they had had.

Abréu for the moment remained in power; but news arrived that the caravel he had sent to Spain had

foundered on the English bank,¹ at the mouth of the River Plate.

This news and the prompt return of Irala with his army put an end to his hopes. Still, knowing he could expect no pardon after the execution of Mendoza, Abréu desperately resolved to fight it out. Having put the city in a defensible condition, he refused Irala entry to it.

Nothing remained but civil war, and Irala and his men at once resolved to lay siege to the capital. His upright character, and the knowledge that all had that he was honest and above all monetary greed, served Irala better than his arms. Little by little Abréu's men deserted to him; so that at last he was left with only fifty followers. Seeing that all was lost, he cut his way through the besieging force and once again took refuge in the woods.

From his forest fastnesses he kept up a guerilla warfare for two years, until Irala, seeing the struggle would be endless and that the country was in continual turmoil, proposed a compromise. It was arranged that Abréu's two chief adherents, Alonso Riquelme and Francisco de Bergara,² should marry Irala's daughters, and that then peace should be proclaimed. The marriages took place with general rejoicing, for all were tired of war.

After entering into various pacts of friendship, the distracted country once more was at peace.

Irala's troubles were not at an end, for news came from Peru that the Licentiate La Gasca, who had not forgiven him his treachery to Alvar Nuñez, or his neglect to check his followers from making slaves of all the Indians they took in warfare, had appointed Don Diego de Centeno, an old conquistador of Peru, to be the Governor of Paraguay.

¹ El Banco Ingles.

² Schmidel calls them "Richkard" and "Jipero."

As a lawyer, La Gasca was aware that the election of Irala by the citizens of Asuncion was legally only a temporary matter, designed by the Council of the Indies for an emergency. No such election was considered valid but for the time it took to send a Governor from Spain.

La Gasca, who, though austere and rigid, was a man of high character and a protector of the Indians against the exactions of the colonists, most probably was unfavourably prepossessed against Irala by all he heard of him, having been sent out specially from Spain to put down the rebellion of the Pizarros, and he must have resented the deposition and ill-treatment meted out to Nuñez by Irala and his gang. The presents that he sent him when Irala was encamped at La Encomienda de Piransules were probably but sops to Cerberus, and designed to keep him on his own side of the Peruvian boundary; for had he crossed it and joined forces with the scattered bands of sympathizers of the Pizarros' cause that still lurked in the hills, La Gasca might have had to face another war. Being as he was the head of the Audiencia de Charcas, the highest court of the most important colony of South America, a court which had at that time jurisdiction not only over all Peru but in the River Plate, he had the right to appoint provincial governors as it seemed good to him. He cast his eyes upon a tried and trusty man in Diego de Centeno, one who had done good service both at the conquest of Peru and after, in the Pizarros' war.

Don Diego at the time was living in retirement on his own estate near Charcas, in what is now Bolivia, but known in those days as High Peru.¹ Throughout his long career he had always been a staunch supporter of the crown and rendered loyal service to the government in all the civil turmoils that had rent the colony.

¹ Alto Peru.

At once he placed himself at the disposal of the Viceroy.

La Gasca determined to appoint Centeno Governor of the northern part of Paraguay and of Alto Peru as far as Cuzco; but before taking up his government he was to proceed to Asuncion to enquire how matters stood. The instructions that La Gasca gave to Diego de Centeno showed him to be a man humane and liberal-minded, and had they but had the chance to have been carried out under the auspices of such a man as was Centeno, much misery would have been spared to Paraguay, and probably the city of Buenos Aires would have been re-established twenty years before Garay refounded it.

The first injunction of La Gasca to his new-made Governor was to treat the Indians well, protect the missionaries in all their efforts at conversion, and not to pass his time in making fruitless expeditions in the search for mines, but to establish towns and induce the Indians to lead a settled life.

In this he showed himself a man of sensible and far-seeing policy. Nuñez had given the same advice in Florida.

Both he and the Licentiate La Gasca clearly perceived that the first step towards civilization was to establish settlements, for the wandering tribes passed miserable lives upon the whole and were a danger to Indians such as the Guaranis, who had progressed a little towards a settled polity. Perhaps it might have been as well for the Spaniards and the other European nations to have stayed at home and civilized themselves, a proceeding that they have delayed down to the present day; but the die had been already cast, and the best policy was that of Nuñez and La Gasca to introduce such civilization as Europe had to offer, to the Americas.

Taxes, La Gasca laid down as an axiom, were to be as light as possible, and in all instances the missionaries were to be consulted as to the Indians' capacity to pay. In this La Gasca showed his wisdom, for the Church throughout the conquest stood between the conquerors and the conquered, and in most instances strove to protect the Indians from the colonists.

Few men in any age have worked with more enthusiasm to reform abuses and protect the weak than did the great Las Casas, or have been more reviled.

Bad churchmen there have been in South America, as there have been in every portion of the world, and priests who lived carelessly and were content to sing their Mass¹ and eat their dinner; and there are some to-day.

Friars there were, intemperate and ignorant, such as the friars who came both with Pizarro and Cortés; but there were others, many of them who passed self-denying lives, and laboured faithfully in the extraordinarily stony field the Indians' hearts presented to the missionaries. Many of the old maps are dotted here and there with crosses, and the inscription "hic occisus est" Father such a one. They gave their lives, and in their case that was all they possessed to give, and liberal-minded men will judge them not by the standards of our age, but by their own.

It was not destined that any of these wise and liberal instructions should be carried out.

Death, that he had braved so often in the field, took Centeno treacherously in full peace.

Under mysterious circumstances that have never been explained Centeno was poisoned at a banquet in the town of Charcas, on the way to his new government.

A few days after the tragedy had taken place the

¹ "Curas de misa y olla," as runs the Spanish phrase.

four deputies named by Irala to conduct Centeno to Asuncion to open his enquiry arrived at Charcas, and at the same time four captains, Pedro Segura, Francisco Cortón, Pedro Sotelo, and Alonso Martin Truxillo, sent by La Gasca for the same purpose, arrived from Lima, and found Centeno dead. With them they brought from Lima the first goats and sheep that ever entered Paraguay.

Upon their journey the Indians, seeing their small numbers, planned a night attack.

As they were creeping stealthily up to the Spaniards' camp, the goats perceived them, and running to and fro gave the alarm.

Good Dean Funes compares the incident to the saving of the Capitol by geese, and says didactically¹ that the introduction of the goats and sheep was the best service to humanity the Spaniards performed.

The mixed commission arrived in Paraguay in 1548, and were received, as was to be expected, by Irala, now that Centeno was removed, most splendidly. His governorship was thus renewed as it were automatically, and the lesson that he had received was laid to heart by him, and from that time his government improved. For all that civil dissension broke out again. Nuflo de Chaves, who by this time had become the second person in the colony and the chief confidant and adviser of his chief, had married Doña Eloisa de Mendoza, daughter of that Francisco de Mendoza who had been executed by Abréu a year or so before. Pushed by his wife, who came from a most powerful family in Spain, he bent all efforts to obtain vengeance for the crime. Abréu took to flight, burying himself again in the thick woods. Chaves, with a band of soldiers, followed him for months without success. For all his efforts, Abréu, who by this time knew all

¹ Dean Funes, lib. i., cap. xi., p. 156.

the fastnesses of the Paraguayan forests, always eluded him.

Three of his captains fell into the hands of Chaves, who hung them instantly. Once more the country was in a state of civil war, and Irala had not the strength to put it down or to espouse the cause of either party, and tried once more to bring about an understanding between the contending factions by two more marriages. Captain Riquelme de Guzman,¹ and Captain Francisco Ortiz de Bergara married respectively two of Irala's daughters, and for a brief period the strife of factions ceased; but still Abréu, fearful of his life, refused to leave the woods.

All seemed so quiet, that for the first time since his return from his long voyage up the Paraguay Irala dared to leave his capital.

A revolt of the Mbayas Indians called him away to punish them. No sooner had he gone than his lieutenant, Felipe de Caceres, who had been one of the most determined enemies of Nuñez and had continued to oppose his party ever since Nuñez left the country, sent out a captain, one Erasa, with a picked band of soldiers to surprise Abréu in his retreat amongst the wilds.

Having got notice that Abréu with four followers was sleeping in a cottage, he waited patiently till midnight, and then, crawling up to the cottage like an Indian, lighting a candle he peered through the walls. Abréu was asleep just in the doorway, and his four friends inside the cottage, that probably was but a hut of reeds. Taking good aim he shot him with a crossbow through the heart, and then retired so stealthily that the four sleeping soldiers never were alarmed.

¹ The father of Rui Diaz de Guzman, the author of "La Argentina."

Thus fell Diego de Abréu, murdered treacherously after a life of wild adventures and of persecution by Irala's faction; but still the civil war dragged on.

Rui Diaz Melgarejo, one of the partisans of Nuñez, still was in arms, and no one could leave Asuncion in safety, for in those days the primeval forests stretched close to the town, and they were full of broken men who would not recognize Irala's rule. Caceres, by a stratagem, captured Melgarejo and threw him into prison, intending to have executed him. He would have done so, but Irala, hastily summoned from his expedition to quell the civil strife, released Melgarejo and brought him to his camp, assigning him to Alonso Riquelme as a prisoner.

Riquelme's son, Rui Diaz de Guzman, says in "La Argentina," that his father allowed the prisoner to escape, taking with him a soldier by name Florez, and that they reached Brazil and were taken captive by a wild tribe of Tupi Indians. Florez was killed and eaten, but an Indian girl, who had fallen in love with Melgarejo, aided him to escape, and after wandering for weeks amongst the woods he reached the town of San Vicente, on the coast.

Don Feliz de Azara, a writer of authority upon the River Plate,¹ denies that any of the Indian tribes were cannibals.

This is an instance of the greater knowledge of the facts so often shown by those who write years after the event, and thus have more authority than mere eye-witnesses, who may have had defective vision, mental or bodily.

Still it is curious that Melgarejo, who knew Rui Diaz de Guzman, should have told him that his companion Florez had been killed and eaten, if it were untrue.

A feast of cannibals, when a man lies bound and

¹ "Viage a la America Meredional" (Feliz de Azara).

looking on, expecting to be served up as a second course, can hardly fail to be remembered with all its details by the man who witnessed it.

Father Lozano refers to cannibalism¹ amongst the tribes, and Father Dobrizhoffer more than hints at it, although he does not say that he had met with it.

The companions of the first navigator, Solis, as they sat terror-stricken in the ship off the coast of Uruguay, declared they saw their captain killed and eaten, and they are hardly likely to have imagined it. Indians, like other nations, grow more civilized, and it is probable that by Azara's time the Indians of the River Plate and Paraguay had long forgotten customs like cannibalism, though their more savage ancestors had practised them.

Irala, notwithstanding the good advice that La Gasca had given him, not to go on fruitless expeditions to search for mines, determined once again to set off for the frontiers of Peru.

What were the motives that impelled him to this decision it is hard to say. Perhaps he felt that only by employing the soldiers in constant expeditions could he avoid more civil wars at home. It may be that the thirst for gold amongst his followers forced him to lead them on for the sake of popularity, causing him to forget all his good resolutions after his first disastrous expedition to Peru.

In the year 1550 he left Asuncion at the head of four hundred Spaniards, with six hundred horses and four thousand Guaranis.

No greater expedition had ever started from Asuncion, and the influx of Spaniards to the country must have been considerable during the past ten years. Where he procured so many horses is a mystery, for

¹ "Descripcion Chorografica del Gran Chaco," etc. (Lozano, book i., cap. xvii.).

they could hardly all have come from Spain, and scarcely time enough had then elapsed for them so greatly to increase, although we know that the horses that Mendoza had set free when he abandoned Buenos Aires soon bred enormously, and in a few years the Indians were riding them.

Schmidel went with the expedition, and has set down some caustic comments on it.

Irala led his men by land with the ships following laden with provisions, and having penetrated the country of the Mbayas Indians, he marched along the borders of Peru, afraid to enter it, and never finding any mines, for they were all across the frontier. Provisions failed him, and his Indians deserted wholesale to their friends the Chiriguano, a branch of the great nation of the Guaranis.

Beaten back at last by hunger, sickness, and the rigours of the climate, he gave the order to return. Caught by the rainy season that on the Upper Paraguay reduces all the country to a marsh, the six hundred horses perished, and at the end of 1551 the expedition straggled back to Asuncion, having lost the best part of its men. Its bad luck passed into a proverb, and the ill-fated venture became known under the title of "La Mala Jornada," that may be rendered the "Unfortunate Campaign."

At last Irala seems to have recognized that it was best to settle down in Paraguay and cultivate the land. From that time forth he governed wisely and became popular, though always haunted by the fear that a new Governor would be sent out from Spain.

The "Unfortunate Campaign" was the last event that Hulderico Schmidel chronicled, for he was almost at the end of his adventurous career. From the first landing of Don Pedro de Mendoza at Buenos Aires Schmidel had been in the forefront of the conquest.

In every expedition he had served faithfully, with distinction to himself and to the satisfaction of his chiefs. Full twenty years had passed since he set sail from "Estrasburgo"¹ to join Mendoza's fleet.

Apparently he had not risen to be an officer, nor to a position of importance in the colony; but still he must have carried weight amongst the soldiery by his experience and his valour, and by his being so completely one of themselves. Most likely, after the fashion of most men who either serve or live long amongst Spaniards, he had become to a large degree Hispaniolized, although, as is seen plainly from his writings, he spoke the language infamously. Few European nations so absorb a foreigner into their ranks as do the Spaniards, even to-day, and in the epoch of their glory the absorbing process must have been stronger still.

In dress, in speech, in military matters, and in the conception of how a man of fashion should behave, all Europe copied Spain during the reign of Charles V. The Spaniards' weapons, horsemanship, their tricks of dress and speech, even their oaths, were copied by all soldiers of the day. In navigation up to the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth the Spaniards led the way. So it is probable that Schmidel liked to be called Don Hulderico, and thought himself a Spaniard of the best, though he remained, as all can see who read his chronicle, a German to the core.

He would have fallen, no doubt, slain in some skirmish with the Indians, or died of fever, had it not happened that on St. James's Day,² 1552, a letter reached him from his home in Germany.

He received it by the hand of one Christoval Reiser, the agent of the Antwerp house of the Brothers Fucar, bankers and money-brokers. This Reiser told his

¹ Straubing.

² El Día de Santiago.

secretary, Sebastian Nidharto, to write to Schmidel for his brother Thomas, telling him to return to his own country.¹

At once he went to see his general to ask for leave to go back to Germany. At first the general refused, being most likely unwilling to lose the services of so stout a soldier, who knew the country well.

Then Schmidel reminded him of his long service, of his twenty years spent in continual perils, his battles and adventures both by sea and land. He spoke, as he had every right to do, with pride, of his faithfulness, both to his general and his king, and how he had always been first to volunteer for every expedition that set out. Irala, who as regards his soldiers was a just and a considerate man, then gave the required permission, and charged Schmidel with a letter to the king, describing all the provinces of El Rio de la Plata, and dwelling on Schmidel's long and faithful service from the first day he landed in America.

What he did not say, and perhaps never knew, was that the rough, uncultured German mercenary had compiled a chronicle of all the main events of the past twenty years. Little Irala knew that almost all we know about him, his expeditions, struggles, ambitions, and eventual triumph would be preserved by the pen of the soldier who then so humbly asked him for permission to go home.

It is not to be supposed that Schmidel's preparations for the journey took him a long time. Little enough of this world's goods he had gathered in the twenty years spent in the Indies.

Although he was a veteran soldier, he could not have been very old, perhaps not more than forty-five,

¹ "Por mano de Christoval Reiser, corredor de los Fucares en Sevilla, de Sebastian Nidharto, que me escribió en nombre de mi hermano Tomas Schmidel, encargandome que procurase bolver a mi patria" (cap. xlix., p. 26).

though he had crowded so many and such strange experiences into those years that he may well have looked far older; but into matters such as mere personal details Schmidel never condescends.

When all was ready, and the two canoes in which he started on his journey, manned by some twenty Indians, were loaded up with his effects, he must have felt a pang at parting with his general and all the friends with whom for twenty years he had fought and striven, enduring cold and heat, hunger and fever, and the ever-present risk of death by a poisoned arrow, shot stealthily by an unseen foe out of the cane-brakes or the woods.

It certainly does not appear that he was specially an imaginative man, as was the other soldier chronicler, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, the historian of Mexico. He lacked the education either of Pedro Cieza de Leon,¹ or of Alonso de Ercilla;² but in one passage he displayed a rude philosophy and an acquaintance with the basic facts of life that does him credit, both as a soldier and a man.

In the country of some Indians whom he calls Barcones, near La Laguna de los Xarayes, he was set to guard a well.

"There only was," he says, "one well in this town, and over it the general placed me as a sentinel, to distribute the water to each one (of the soldiers) according to the measure that he had ordered, and even with this precaution, we suffered so much from the want of water that we had no thought either of silver or of gold;³ but all the cry was water."

¹ "La Cronica del Peru."

² "La Araucana" (The Conquest of Chile).

³ "Solo havia un Poço en este pueblo, en que me pusó el General de Centinela para ditsribuir el agua segun la medida dado por el, y aun con esta providencia teniamos grandes trabajos con la falta de agua, y tantos que no nos acordabamos del Oro y Plata, que todo era clamar por agua" (cap. xlvii., p. 23).

Most probably he never drank himself, being, as he says, invariably faithful to his general and his flag, and certainly having received his orders, he would not allow a single man to drink out of his turn, or have a drop too much.

When the time came to bid farewell to those with whom he had lived so long and endured so many perils, he must have done it with a pang.

Asuncion was slowly rising from the condition of an assemblage of mud huts, thatched with reeds and palm leaves, to the condition of a Spanish town. Many of the long, low, red-tiled buildings, with their high steps and hitching-posts for horses at the door, date almost from the conquest, and have survived up to the present day.

When Schmidel took his last look at Asuncion, the great primeval woods must have been well cut back, and as the cathedral stands upon the site of the first church, it is not difficult to reconstruct the town as Schmidel saw it. The sandy streets that used to fill with water in the rains, some forty years ago, were probably more or less laid out. The square where now the market-women sit and chatter whilst their donkeys play, chasing one another through the booths, was then no doubt the plaza, round which were grouped the houses of the chief magnates of the place. The houses must have straggled along the river banks, leaving gaps here and there of untilled ground on which grew castor-oil plants, low palmetto scrub, and an occasional Mamey, a Papaw tree, or feathery palm. Orange trees had scarcely had the time to become wild, although if they were introduced they must have shown their adaptability to the soil, for in no country of the world have they invaded all the woods, waste spaces, and the islands in the river as they have done in Paraguay. Guarani women with their single

garment, a white shift cut low with black embroidery about the breast,¹ must have squatted here and there retailing mandioca, home-made cigars, and bits of sugar-cane.

Before the dawn, long strings of country girls with baskets on their heads must have come noiselessly as cats, in Indian file, into the town to catch the early market, with the leader carrying a torch, and all of them smoking long, thick cigars.

The sandy road between the woods that now runs past La Recoleta to the little plain at Luque, then must have been a track much used, for the plain is the first place where horses in considerable numbers could have grazed.

Then, as now, in the incomparable Paraguayan night, with its deep, blue sky set with a million stars, the fireflies must have flitted through the trees, making the horses start and shake their heads when they darted near to them, with a tinkling of their bridles, sounding as crisp as breaking icicles, in that clear atmosphere. The view across the waving sea of palms in the Gran Chaco; the mysterious noises that waft across the mighty river in the night time to the Paraguayan shore, must have impressed him strangely as he gazed at and listened to them for the last time, after so many years. The Indians in their dug-out canoes, silently drifting down the current between the floating masses of the "camelotes," one of their number standing immovable as if cut out of bronze, his bow drawn ready and his arrow notched to shoot the fish, he would mark half unconsciously, or perhaps not at all, with his thoughts fixed on "Estrasburgo en Baviera," that after his long wanderings he was once more to see.

Most likely his old comrades came down to the river bank to see him off, half sorrowfully, half envious

¹ El Tupoi.

of his luck. Seated upon their horses they would watch the canoe in which their comrade and old fellow-conqueror sat, till gradually it vanished behind the feathery bamboos of one of the myriad islands, on its way back into the world, and then gallop back to town, a little sadly, talking of their old friend.

Schmidel himself, seated in his canoe under an awning made of bamboos and thatched with palm leaves, no doubt was occupied with all the goods, the tiger skins and parrots that he had with him as he says, and with his Indians, then, after straining for a last look at Asuncion and at his friends, would be astonished that they had disappeared whilst he was left alone upon the stream. He started from Asuncion on St. Stephen's Day, 1552, and after paddling sixty leagues downstream, left his canoes and struck by land into Brazilian territory. So difficult the journey was, so great the distance, food so scarce and hard to come by, the Indian tribes so hostile, that it was only on July 18th, 1553, that he reached San Vicente on the Brazilian coast. His idea had been to get a passage home in a ship that he had heard had come from Lisbon, half owned in that port and half in Antwerp, where Schmidel had some friends. His journey proved so full of wild adventures that he says, "Though I have travelled¹ so much during my life, I never had traversed any road more rough and troublesome."

In San Vicente he found a ship from Portugal and took a passage in her.

Four months he navigated without once seeing land until he reached the island of Terceira, in the Azores,² and arrived in Lisbon on September 3rd, 1553,

¹ "De suerte que aunque he peregrinado tanto en toda mi vida (no) he tenido camino mas aspero, molesto y desazonado."

² On this voyage he saw fish that he calls Doninas (Toninas) and Pesche Serro (Pez Sierra).

a full year's journey from Asuncion, but one that Schmidel does not appear to have considered of excessive length, for he makes no comment on it.

From Lisbon he embarked in a Dutch ship, whose captain was one Henry Shutzen. He put aboard her all his property, "with bread and wine and other like things," and several parrots¹ that he had brought with him from the Indies.

The captain of the ship got drunk in Lisbon and sailed before his time, leaving poor Schmidel marooned upon the beach. However, it turned out to Schmidel's benefit, for the captain, who probably continued drunk, ran his ship on some rocks on entering Cadiz,² and everyone except himself was drowned.

The parrots, that must have given Schmidel an infinity of trouble upon his year of pilgrimage, were naturally lost, which grieved him greatly, for he was a simple soul, and probably intended them as presents for his friends.

On St. Andrew's Day he sailed from Cadiz in another ship, and in the Bay of Biscay got into a gale. After much peril they reached a port in England that he calls Uviet,³ rudderless and dismasted, but in safety, though eight of the accompanying vessels foundered in the gale.

At last, on January 26th, 1554, after two years of navigation and of journeying, he arrived in Antwerp safe and sound, and in his epilogue thanks God fervently for His goodness in delivering him from all the perils he had undergone, both upon land and sea.

What he did in Bavaria after his long exile, except to publish his chronicle, with an engraving of himself

¹ "Meti en el navio loque llevaba, y vino, pan y otras cosas semejantes y algunos papagayos que tenia de las Indias."

² Probably these rocks were those known as "Las Puercas," at the entrance of Cadiz Harbour.

³ The Isle of Wight (?).

treading upon a tiger, and adorned with maps and the arms of the Schmidel family, that is to us unknown. He may have felt the atmosphere of Straubingen not quite congenial after so many years passed in Asuncion.

Probably his friends grew tired of Don Hulderico's stories of the New World, for none of them could possibly have known how important the old soldier's book was destined to become.

The proudest moment of his life must have been at Seville, when, as he says with pride (just pride), "I gave¹ the general's letters to the king and laid before him a full account of all those regions and their conditions, in the most faithful way I could."

For better or for worse, when he arrived at Straubingen his life's work was finished, and he had come to port. For twenty years he had fought faithfully for Spain, enduring heat and cold, wounds, shipwreck, famine and fevers, without complaint. The ideal soldier, brutal at times but not unkindly in the main, simple and credulous, although not superstitious, and with no single spark either of humour or imagination to cheer him on his way. Not that he felt the want, apparently, of either of them, in all his pilgrimage.

Leagues and unfathomable seas, and the mountain ranges nature has placed in the way of any comprehension by one nation of the mentality of any other, separate him from such a man as Bernal Diaz del Castillo. Schmidel has not preserved for us any of the intimate details of Mendoza's expedition such as Bernal Diaz has set down in such terse Spanish and with such "dry" humour, about the expedition of Cortés. He has sketched no single character of any of his comrades or his officers, or left a picture

¹ "Haviendo llegado a Sevilla entregué yo mismo estas cartas al Rey, y le hice relacion de todas estas Regiones y sus circunstancias, lo mas fielmente que pude."

of the many Indian chiefs he must have met upon the Upper Paraguay.

Schmidel had none of the intense curiosity about all Indian customs such as had Pedro Cieza de Leon, also a common soldier, but who has left the most authoritative contemporary history of the Incas and their rule that has survived for us.

The scanty observations on the Indians that Schmidel has recorded were such as any other private soldier of those days might have set down, mostly of the Indian women,¹ noting occasionally that they went naked, at other times that they were handsome, and again that they were ugly and wore short petticoats.

These were his sins of omission, but, on the other hand, he is the sole contemporary authority upon Don Pedro de Mendoza's expedition, for the brief ode of Father Luis de Miranda hardly counts as history.²

Schmidel saw Buenos Aires founded; was at the disastrous skirmish on the Arroyo de Luján; first saw the Bolas and described their use; endured the miseries of the first settlement, and no doubt had his share of eating frogs, rats and other vermin ("otra sabandija") in those disastrous days.

He must have known La Maldonada, and heard a hundred times her strange adventure with the lioness.

Foremost in every expedition, he had exceptional advantages for acquiring all kinds of information, although he made but little use of them.

Still his account is scrupulously exact as to the

¹ Of the women of the Xarayes, who he calls "Schuess," he says: "Estas mugeres son muy hermosas, y grandes en amoradas; muy corrientes y de naturaleza muy ardiente a mi modo de ver."

² Father Luis de Miranda was Don Pedro de Mendoza's chaplain. He suffered all the hardships of the first conquest and wrote a brief rhyming account of it that is generally dignified as an "ode." He then returned to Spain and wrote an inordinately dull play. (See Appendix III.)

main facts of the first settlement, and as there is no other, for both the "Argentinas"¹ are long subsequent to his own chronicle, it remains authoritative.

He could not rise to the appreciation of the fine qualities of Alvar Nuñez, nor could it well have been expected of him, seeing that Nuñez was a man born far before his time. Upon the other hand, he could appreciate the sterling honesty and skill in leading men of Domingo de Irala, and showed he could by following him into the jaws of death at least a hundred times.

It seems he made but little money in his twenty years of wandering, and all that he brought home, even his parrots, were swallowed up in the wrecked vessel that luckily set sail without him. All those who read his chronicle must be grateful to him for having written down a page of history that without him would have perished utterly.

It is permissible to hope that he lived long² and happily in Straubingen, and that his stories of the Indies never palled upon his friends. In his old age, when the rough winds shook the high slated roofs of the old German town and snow lay piled in heaps about the corners of the streets, his thoughts must now and then have wandered back again to the soft climate of Asuncion, the quivering palm trees, and the lizards basking in the sun upon the bright, red ground.

As he wrote on, his flagon of small beer beside him, and his long pipe, stuffed with the weed that he no doubt brought home with him from Paraguay, alight and smoking like a factory chimney in a gale, perhaps his hand, notched with the scars of many a battle, was drawn across his eyes occasionally, and a strange oath in Spanish was stifled in his beard.

¹ "La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman.

"La Argentina" (a long rhymed chronicle), Barco de la Centenera.

² He is supposed to have died at Regensburg.

CHAPTER XII

IRALA by this time felt himself more settled in his government, and less inclined to a policy of isolation and detachment from the mother country. Though he appears to have done nothing towards refounding Buenos Aires, he still felt the necessity of a port in the estuary of the River Plate, in which vessels from Spain could lie with safety. In 1555 he sent Captain Juan Romero with a hundred men to search for one. Romero found a harbour at the mouth of the San Juan, in Uruguay, not very far off from the islands of San Gabriel. Hardly had he built a fort than the Charrua Indians attacked him in such force that he was obliged to renounce his undertaking and return towards Asuncion.

Upon the journey, which was always arduous on account of the swift current of the Parana, the banks and shallows and the islands lying in the middle of the stream that made the wind uncertain, rendering it extremely difficult to work the unwieldy ships of those days, he disembarked with certain of his people to rest and cook their food. One of the sudden floods caused by rain in the upper country, perhaps a thousand miles away, that sweep the Parana, carrying before them great trees and high piled masses of aquatic vegetation, surprised him and his men.

Romero saved himself by swimming to the ship, but all his followers who had been ashore were swept away and drowned, except one woman who was found alive after eight days had passed, although the flood had passed above her head. Truly, the

Spaniards of those days were made of iron, and as one contemplates all their amazing deeds and strange adventures, one can but think that all they did and all they underwent could not have been inspired by the mere love of gold. No doubt they felt they were a chosen race, raised up by Providence to spread the light in the dark places of the world. Others have felt the same, and having felt it have little right to cast a stone at their bold predecessors.

In the same year (1555) Irala, who was always anxious about his position, that had never been confirmed at court, sent Don Pedro de Molina home to Spain accompanied by Chaves, ostensibly to give an account of Paraguay and of the various expeditions and discoveries that had taken place.

An order that had lately come from Spain to suspend all expeditions and settlements till further notice, had made Irala very nervous, and the real object of Molina's mission was to push his interests. Irala could not have chosen two better ambassadors, for both were men of family and both were quite devoted to their chief.

For all their pains they were unable to succeed in getting Irala formally appointed Governor. The court of Spain, although it had not judged it prudent to send Alvar Nuñez back to Paraguay for fear of civil war, yet had a high opinion of him, and only tolerated Irala's claims because there was no one prepared to take the governorship.

Thus for some years Irala was left unchallenged and governed wisely, always taking care to keep the soldiery upon his side by not enquiring over closely as to their treatment of the Indians.

The colony flourished under his paternal rule, and many houses, some of which still stand in Asuncion, were built.

Goats and sheep had been already brought from

Peru, and horses had increased enormously, but, curiously enough, no cattle had been introduced.

Two brothers, Portuguese, whose name was Goes, in or about the year 1555, landed somewhere in Uruguay with eight cows and a bull. From these nine animals were derived the mighty herds that spread at one time, in a wild state, over the Pampas of the River Plate. Gaete, a Portuguese, who brought the precious animals up to Asuncion, arrived there safely with them all after a long and arduous journey through the wilds. Instead of money, he received a cow as his reward, a guerdon that the citizens held to be excessive. So scarce were cows at that time, that "dearer than Gaete's cows"¹ became a familiar saying in Asuncion.

Irala was much troubled, as were most Spanish governors of those times, by partial revolts amongst the colonists. He himself had set the example of revolt, and it was natural that men so far away from the seat of government in Spain should imitate him when they had any grievance, or thought that by declaring independence of the local government they could better their estate. For some such reason the inhabitants of a township called Ontiberos formed themselves into a community and determined to throw off Irala's yoke. Amongst them were a number of old soldiers, who raised a formidable force. Irala sent his son-in-law, Pedro de Segura, to punish them, with fifty chosen men. The rebels were entrenched so strongly that he was beaten back severely wounded and with the loss of many of his men. Though burning for revenge, Irala prudently put off his vengeance till a more favourable moment should occur. He acted wisely, for news arrived that touched him nearly, so nearly that he forgot the petty squabbles of his colonists. The long-expected blow had fallen.

¹ "Mas caro que las vacas de Gaete."

At last the Emperor Charles V. had made up his mind to appoint a Governor for Paraguay. Charles, though not a born procrastinator like his son Philip, with his accustomed adage of "Time and I against any other three," generally came to a decision very warily. In 1555 he named Don Juan de Sanabria Governor, a man well known for his humane and liberal views.

As he was just preparing to set out he died at Cadiz. His death was a severe blow to the rising colony, for Charles V., and, as a general rule, Philip his son, chose wisely in such matters, and showed as much concern for the welfare, spiritual and bodily, of the Indians as did Isabella, the greatest of the Spanish queens.

The weakness both of Charles and of his son was the mean way that they rewarded those who served them; but in regard to choice of their officials, in many instances they selected men well fitted for their posts.

Thus they confirmed Pizarro and Cortés in their respective conquests, granted them titles, and in a measure honoured them. The choice of the Licentiate La Gasca to pacify Peru showed that the Emperor was quite alive to his great qualities. Nor was he wrong in his high estimate of the man's abilities, for seldom has it been within the power of any single man to achieve all that La Gasca did achieve by the sheer force of character and will.

After the death of Don Juan de Sanabria, the Emperor named his son to govern in his place. His father's fleet lay in the Bay of Cadiz, and all he had to do was but to go aboard and take command.

All went well with him until he reached Rio de Janeiro, but there his ship ran on a rock and foundered, and he and all his men were drowned.

Certainly the stars fought in their courses for Irala. In 1555 the Emperor at last appointed Irala Governor of Paraguay and Viceroy of the River Plate.

At last success had crowned his efforts, and the people of Asuncion were all delighted, for Irala had become most popular, and they descried the hand of God in the strange fate of the two last-appointed viceroys.

All seemed to smile upon Irala after so many years of struggle and anxiety.

He wanted but the sanction of the Church. Nor was that long denied him, for in the same year (1555) two vessels came from Spain, commanded by General Martin de Orue, bringing the first Bishop of Asuncion, Don Fray Pedro de la Torre, a Franciscan monk.

The coming of the bishop and his confirmation in his governorship naturally filled Irala's cup to overflowing. The bishop made his solemn entry to the capital of the new see amidst the rejoicing of all the citizens upon the eve of Palm Sunday,¹ 1555. He was styled Bishop, not of Asuncion, but of the "Oppidum sive Pagar de Rio de la Plata."² Thus, as Irala virtually became the Viceroy of the River Plate, so was the bishop's see not confined only to Paraguay but embraced the whole viceroyalty. The new-made bishop found twelve secular priests in Asuncion, with two friars of the Franciscan Order and two of the Order of La Merced.

Irala happened to be absent from the city at the time of the bishop's coming, but at once hastened back.

Everything smiled upon him, for in the two vessels that had brought the bishop there came a number of troops and an assortment of every kind of arms.

He and the bishop founded schools, built the cathedral and the town hall, and many private houses were erected at the same time. He also made a dockyard, in which he kept two thousand workmen constantly employed.

¹ La vispera de Ramos; Dean Funes.

² Father Charlevoix, "Histoire du Paraguay."

This was the halcyon period of his career, and his activity seems to have been intense.

Seeing the evils that had arisen under the system known as "Repartimientos,"¹ he took a census of all the Indians capable of bearing arms, grouped them as far as possible into villages, where they were called "mitayos" and obliged to give two months a year of labour, between the ages of fifty and eighteen.

The system was a kind of mitigated slavery, but at the same time confirmed the Indians in the possession of their lands.

This edict of Irala's was approved by the Council² of the Indies, and for a long time was the law in Paraguay. Although Irala had neglected to repeople and refound Buenos Aires, yet little settlements must have been forming all the time in Uruguay and about the fort Gaboto built upon the Carcañal, in Santa Fé.

In Paraguay itself, which naturally Irala paid most attention to, efforts were being made continually to build more towns and subjugate the tribes. In 1557, Rui Diaz de Melgarejo received orders to proceed to the new province of Guayrá. It had been settled and a town founded, not far from the great falls upon the Parana, by Garcia Rodriguez de Vergara.

As Vergara was a native of the town of Ontiberos, he had called the settlement by the name of the old Spanish town where he was born; but it had soon reverted to its native name.³

That Melgarejo should have been sent to report on the condition of the new settlement shows that Irala had conciliated most of the partisans of Nuñez, who at the first opposed him bitterly.

From the first breaking out of civil troubles Melgarejo had been a follower of Nuñez, and had been obliged to escape into Brazil.

¹ See Chapter X.

² Dean Funes, Book I., cap. xiii.

³ Guayrá.

The settlement upon the falls had never flourished, so Melgarejo changed its situation to the other side of the great River Parana. There he built a new town on the River Piquiry, to which he gave the name of Ciudad Real. Tradition says he planted sugar-canes,¹ and that the Jesuits found the Indians still cultivating them.

Certainly the province of Guayrá possessed and still possesses a most fertile soil, and Rui Diaz de Guzman² says that in his time it was rich in cotton, indigo, sugar, and linen cloths.

Its founder, Melgarejo, was not content merely with agriculture. His first act was to enslave the Indians, out of whose labour he is said to have made a handsome fortune, but at the cost of the ruin of the town, for all the Indians, disgusted with his rule, retired into the woods. In the same year (1557) Nuflo de Chaves was despatched to La Laguna de los Xarayes to found another town.

After a long search he found no situation fit for settlement, as all the country was a marsh.

As he advanced towards the north he found his passage up the river barred by the Chiquitos Indians, who in a village well fortified with palisades stopped his way to Peru.

His force consisted of two hundred and twenty Spaniards and fifteen hundred Guaranis. Chaves, who was a most ambitious man, saw that the time had come for him to make himself quite independent of Irala, and to carve out a province for himself.

He at once determined never to return to Paraguay, and instantly attacked the town.

He took it with a considerable loss—a loss that next day proved greater than he had looked for, as all

¹ Father Charlevoix, "Histoire du Paraguay."

² "La Argentina," Lib. III., cap. iii.

the wounded died from the effects of the poisoned arrows of the Indians. His men were struck with panic and demanded to be led back to Los Xarayes to try and found a town. This was the last thing Chaves wished for, and instantly he took a resolution quite in the spirit of Pizarro and Cortés.

Knowing his men would certainly refuse to follow him in the advance he had determined on, he boldly said, just as Pizarro had done before him in the Isle of Tumbez, that all who chose to return home could do so, for he would only take those who would cast their lot in with him of their own free will. It was a desperate move, but one that generally succeeded with the Spaniards of those days. There seems to have been in nearly all the Spanish soldiery a reserve of heroism that their commanders could count upon, if they displayed real courage and a genius for command. Fifty brave spirits placed their swords and their lives at the disposal of their general, and swore to follow him wherever he should lead.

The rest elected one Captain Gonzalez Casco as their leader, and set out homewards to Asuncion. How Chaves would have fared is doubtful, had not an event occurred that played into his hands. Towards the end of 1557, or the beginning of 1558, news reached him of Irala's death of a slow fever that he contracted whilst overseeing Indians cutting wood on his estates.

Full three and thirty years had passed since first he landed with Don Pedro de Mendoza in the River Plate. Years full of struggle and adventure had altered him from the mere ambitious soldier that he was at first into a wise and prudent Governor.

Many as well as he have attained power by treason, and lived their treason down by the services that they

have given to the State. The fatal blot on his career was his base treachery to Alvar Nuñez, a man of twenty times more virtues and far greater talent than himself. In his case his conduct took a meaner aspect, in that he set others to do his dirty work, and kept himself well in the background till Nuñez had been sent a prisoner back to Spain. Still it is to his credit that, being in possession of supreme authority, he did not cause Nuñez to be assassinated, after the fashion of so many of the conquistadores when they found a rival in their path. He did not trump up a false charge of treason or rebellion against Nuñez, as he might well have done and have him executed in the way Pedrarias Davila murdered the illustrious Vasco Nuñez de Balboa in Panama. All this is to his credit, and it must not be forgotten that his position was peculiar.

Chosen as Governor by his fellow-citizens, after the death of Juan de Ayolas, he had been nominated by him as his successor in the same way that Ayolas had been named Governor by Don Pedro de Mendoza when he returned to Spain. Although he knew that it was certain a new viceroy would be appointed, yet for a considerable time he had enjoyed the sweets of power, and became popular with the colonists. Not brilliant, after the style of the great conquistadores, nor even reaching to the standard of Belalcazar, the conqueror of Popayán, Valdivia in Chile, and without the spirit of adventure of his own lieutenant, Nuflo de Chaves, he yet was a good if not a great commander. Most certainly he never spared himself either in battle or in the affairs of state. Asuncion and Paraguay in general owed him much, although he certainly neglected Buenos Aires, a curious circumstance, as it was there that he first saw the New World.

His policy was one of isolation, and curiously enough

it was the policy of Dr. Francia, who closed the country to the outer world for more than twenty years.

Although he does not seem to have been a tyrant to the Indians himself, he did not check his officers in their oppression of them. In fact, so difficult was his position at the first, that had he tried to do so he would have been deposed.

Schmidel sets forth the views of the private soldiers of his own class upon such matters without ambiguity, and it was on such men as Schmidel and the rough soldiers who had first landed with Don Pedro de Mendoza that Irala most relied. The people of Asuncion were always true to him, and when he died all classes mourned his loss sincerely, for he was just the kind of man that they could understand.

In a world where mediocrity prevails, as it has always done, and will do, till another and a different race of men comes into existence, the man of moderate virtues and not too brilliant talents has a secure position and a safe niche in the well-stuccoed fane appointed for his kind.

His epitaph is "Aurea Mediocritas," cut deep into his tombstone, with the letters well run in with lead, for fear of weathering.

Such has been Irala's portion in the history of the conquest of the River Plate.

The brilliant talents and the high character, the self-denial and the far-seeing views of Alvar Nuñez in his own lifetime came to naught.

Not brilliant, but perhaps possessing qualities for controlling men that Nuñez lacked, Irala came to be considered as the father of his country, a position that from his integrity, contempt of wealth, and ceaseless energy most justly was his due.

Dean Funes says that he made a good ending, dying as a good Christian should do, having forgiven all his

enemies and made provision for the good order of the State, taking to the sepulchre¹ the tears of Paraguay and the respect even of the barbarians.

One thing is certain, and when the Paraguayans raise a statue to the father of their country they should write it on the plinth. He died so poor that all he left as personal property was but a yoke of oxen and his armour, a mixture of his dual character of Cincinnatus and of Scipio, and the best testimony that any governor can give of his integrity.

He wrote but little, and only two of his recorded writings are preserved.

One is a sober, business-like report of his unlucky expedition² up the Paraguay, addressed to the Emperor Charles V.

The other is more notable, as he composed it just before approaching Buenos Aires and "posted" it under a cross, with the words "Letters at the foot" written on it, where it was found by Captain Mendoza.

In it he warns whoever finds it to be on his guard³ against the tigers, "for there are many of them." His hand was, no doubt, better fitted for the sword than for the pen.

¹ "Llevando a su sepulcro las lagrimas del Paraguay y el respeto aun de los barbaros" (Funes, cap. xiii., p. 165).

² "Cartas de Indias." Madrid, 1877.

³ "Avisando syempre de se guardan de los Tygros, que ay muchos" ("Archivo General de Indias," 925. 2. 10. Pieza 11A).

CHAPTER XIII

IRALA's death left Chaves free to prosecute his designs of conquest. It also left him by far the most considerable of the older colonists, both by his talents and his long experience of the New World.

On his death-bed Irala had nominated Captain Gonzalo de Mendoza as his successor. Of the great family of the Mendozas, he was a near relation of the unfortunate Don Pedro de Mendoza, the founder of the colony. This gave him weight and prestige with all the colonists.

His first act was to announce that he would follow the same policy Irala had pursued.

As this was above all a policy of conciliation and of tolerance it made him popular at once.

He then wrote to the various leaders who had set out either to found towns or to explore, announcing that he was now the Governor, and offering them support and aid if they submitted to his rule.

Rui Diaz Melgarejo, from the new town that he had founded at Guayrá, answered immediately promising adherence to him.

Melgarejo, who was getting old, had led an agitated life, and was, moreover, the last considerable adherent of Alvar Nuñez who was left alive. In his exile¹ in San Vicente, he had married a young and handsome woman, Doña Gloria de Becerra, but much against her will.

Her parents forced her to the match, but she had a lover, one Juan Carillo, whom she had never given up.

¹ See Chapter XI.

Rui Diaz Melgarejo, who was a man not to be played with in any circumstances, and especially in such a matter, surprised the lovers when they thought themselves secure, and with one dagger thrust pierced both of them. This act of violence, and his long resistance to Irala, no doubt impelled him to make submission to the new Governor, for he could hardly have maintained himself in such a distant place as was Guayrá without his countenance and aid.

Chaves was of a different character, and though quite as violent as was Melgarejo, was more of a diplomatist and had not the same necessity for help from the new Governor. Moreover, he had determined, come what may, never to go back to Asuncion.

Mendoza's letter reached him high up upon the Paraguay, in the territory of the Chiquitos Indians. He sent back an aggressive answer, and from that moment cut himself loose from Paraguay.

Comparatively few of the conquistadores ever seem to have wished to cut themselves adrift from Spain, with the exception of the two Pizarro brothers in Peru.

However, there are many instances of men in the position in which Chaves now found himself who wished to carve out independent governments. Such were Valdivia in Chile and Belalcazar in Popayán, but on the whole they were exceptions to the general rule. Chaves was one of these exceptions, and so he resolutely set himself to travel northwards, followed by the fifty soldiers who had remained loyal to him.

He knew that though the territory of High Peru¹ was theoretically dependent upon Lima, in reality it was unconquered, so he determined that it should be his prize. His first care was to get away in safety from the country of the Chiquitos Indians,

¹ Alto Peru, now Bolivia.

a warlike race, who had poisoned all their wells and retired into the woods, from which they only issued forth to plunder and to slay. Chaves had sent two of his soldiers as ambassadors to make peace with them. Their only answer was to kill the ambassadors and to attack ferociously the little force that Chaves led.

When he at last got clear of them, and arrived on the open plains that stretched from the west bank of the Paraguay right to the foothills of the Andes, he found himself anticipated. The actual Viceroy of Peru, the Marquess of Cañete, had despatched a well-furnished expedition under a captain of renown, Andres Manso, to effect the conquest.

As often happened in the conquest of the New World, neither of them knew of the other's presence in the country till they actually met. Neither would yield. Manso was far superior in men and in equipment, but the men from Paraguay were seasoned soldiers who had passed many years in constant warfare, and took no heed of odds.

Moreover, they all fought as it were with the rope around their necks, for if they had been taken prisoners they would have got scant mercy, and they had all determined not to return to Paraguay. Manso perceived the class of men he had to deal with, and though he probably could have overpowered Chaves by the force of numbers, he knew his losses would be great.

Prudently, therefore, they agreed to compromise and to refer the matter to the Audiencia de las Charcas¹ to be adjudged upon.

¹ The Audiencia de las Charcas was established in what is now the Bolivian town of Chuquisaca. It was a most inconvenient place in which to establish a high court of appeal, for it was separated by great mountain ranges from Lima and from the sea-coast, and any case judged there caused the utmost inconvenience to the litigants.

The Audiencia gave its decision that the territory in question should be divided, and each contending captain have his share. The two forces lay encamped not far from one another, and Manso, who was a simple soldier, brave as his sword but no diplomatist, seems to have been contented with the award, and feared no treachery.

Chaves was cast in quite another mould, and from the first had chafed against the Audiencia's award. So, leaving his lieutenant, Salazar, in command of his little force, Chaves posted off to Lima to see the viceroy.

Salazar, who was devoted to his leader Chaves, who must have had qualities that inspired confidence in his leadership to an extraordinary degree, so worked upon the soldiers under the command of Manso that the greater part of them deserted him and joined the other side. Salazar, not content with this, seized upon Manso and sent him prisoner to the interior. Chaves, upon the other hand, arrived at Lima in an incredibly short time, and was well received by the authorities.

Being as able a diplomat as he was an intrepid soldier, he represented to the viceroy that the conquest of Upper Peru was of supreme importance to the viceroyalty, and whilst disdaining any personal benefit, dazzled the viceroy with his schemes.

Another circumstance was in his favour, for the Viceroy of Peru, the Marquess de Cañete, was an offshoot of the Mendoza family, so when he learned that Chaves was married to a lady of that name,¹ he welcomed him with open arms.

Seeing in Chaves a discreet and modest man, and not perceiving his real talents and his vast ambition, the viceroy hit upon a plan. Having created Upper

¹ Chaves had married Doña Elvira (or Eloisa) Manrique de Lara, daughter of Don Francisco de Mendoza, whom Abréu had beheaded in Asuncion.

Peru into a separate province, he named his son, Garcia Hurtado de Mendoza, the Governor of it.

Chaves he appointed King's Lieutenant under him. Nothing could well have served the views of Chaves better, for he knew that the young Governor was quite incompetent. The new-made Governor and his lieutenant left Lima amid salvoes of artillery, with all the city flagged. Chaves, who was far too astute to come to an open rupture with his titular commander, on all occasions publicly deferred to him, but kept the real power in his own hands.

When he rejoined the faithful Salazar, his forces now enormously increased by the defection of all Manso's men, he marched into the country now known as Los Moxos, and being well aware that to secure his power he must have a city as his seat of government, founded the town of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in the year 1558, upon a little river underneath a hill.

This city still exists, but in the year 1575 it was removed some sixty leagues more to the eastward, where it stands to-day. Chaves had marvellous luck, for sixty thousand Indians, chiefly of the nation of the Moxos, submitted to his rule without a battle, and remained faithful to him to the end of his career.

Manso had not renounced his ambition of finding for himself unconquered territory out of which to form a government. In spite of his misfortunes, he contrived to raise fresh troops within Peruvian territory. With these he built a town near to the Sierra de Cascotero, where naturally his interests and those of Chaves were certain to conflict. Before the rivals actually declared war on one another, the Audiencia de las Charcas intervened.

They qualified Manso's action as a usurpation of the rights of Chaves, and sent the Alcalde of Chuqui-

saca, Diego Pantoja, to order Manso to retire to his own territory.

Manso, who had news of his coming from the Indians, fell on him at the crossing of a river and scattered all his men.

Then, fearing what might happen to him when the news of his action became known at Chuquisaca, he retired into the country of the Chiriguano Indians. These Indians received him in a friendly fashion, although they had determined to attack him at the first opportunity.

Manso then crossed into what is now the Argentine Republic, and in the year 1561 founded the town of La Rioja. This city still exists as a provincial capital. He then gave orders to Captain Antonio Luis de Cabrera to found a town called La Barranca, forty leagues from Santa Cruz.

Chaves looked upon these proceedings as an infringement of his authority, as indeed they were. He certainly was not a man who anyone could trifle with, but to his military talents he joined a cool head and a calculating mind. Being aware that he stood high in favour with the Viceroy of Peru, he was preparing to send an embassy asking him to interfere. Before the messengers had started an event occurred that made their journey useless, for the Chiriguano, rising in great force, fell upon Manso and his soldiers and massacred them all.

The plain where he was slain still bears his name, "El Llano de Manso," and remains, like so many other names, such as "Los Ballesteros,"¹ "El Fraile Muerto," and the like, a fitting record of the time. Only Cabrera saved his life, and made his way to Tucuman, where it is said that his descendants live.

Chaves, his rival dead, determined to avenge him,

¹ The crossbowmen.

and in a pitched battle on the same plains where Captain Manso fell routed the Chiriguanos utterly. Chaves was thus left free to prosecute his schemes without a rival.

In Asuncion the people had elected Don Juan Ortiz Vergara as their Governor after the death of Don Gonzalo de Mendoza, who had been Irala's nominee. The bishop also had declared him interim Governor of El Rio de la Plata, in the king's name.

This nomination, and the fact that ships were always coming from and going back to Spain, seems to point to the fact that settlements were being formed in the actual estuary of the River Plate, although Buenos Aires was abandoned to the Indians. It certainly is strange that though the governors of Paraguay were evidently well aware of the importance of the River Plate, and even took their title from its name, for so many years they should have neglected to re-people and refound the town they must have known, both by position and the fact of being the first place on which the Spaniards disembarked, was clearly destined for the capital. Almost at once, Vergara, the new Governor, had to put down a rising of the Agaces. These Indians, always fierce and warlike, had been grossly ill-treated by the colonists. Acquaintanceship with horses and with firearms had robbed these two chief weapons of the conquistadores of much of their first terror, and the Guaranis had learned the art of poisoning their arrows from their companions who had followed Chaves in his campaigns amongst the wild tribes of the north.

Thus they were far more formidable than they had proved when first the Spaniards had invaded them.

Luckily for the colonists, the poison used by the Guaranis turned out a failure, and none of the soldiers died from its effects.

The Governor Vergara took the field himself against the Agaces, with five hundred Spaniards and four thousand Guaranis.

The Agaces, under two young chiefs whose Spanish names of Pablo and Narciso make a strange contrast to that of their father, Carupitati, advanced to meet him boldly, but though they far outnumbered Vergara's force, were beaten in a decisive action on the River Yaguari upon the third of May in the year 1560.

Vergara, who was a prudent man, after his victory proclaimed an amnesty. For a brief space peace reigned in the distracted colony. Then a revolt broke out in the distant province of Guayrá that at first seemed to be but partial, till a letter from Rui Diaz Melgarejo, brought to Vergara by an Indian, hidden in a groove made in his bow, informed him that the whole province had rebelled.

The peril was imminent, for the town of Guayrá was surrounded by swarms of Indians. The forces Melgarejo had at his disposal were but small, and famine stared him in the face. Vergara found himself also in difficulties, for he had disbanded all his troops after the last expedition against the Agaces, and they had all gone back to their own homes. In those days, although every Spanish colonist was a potential man-at-arms, obliged and ready to march against the enemy at the call of his Governor, no standing force was kept in arms, except in centres such as Lima, or at Mexico.

Seeing the danger to the State and that the fall of Guayrá could not be long delayed, Rui Diaz de Riquelme, who had been at open enmity with Melgarejo ever since the times of Alvar Nuñez, came to the Governor and volunteered to go to the assistance of his enemy, so hardly pressed in his poor frontier town.

Early in the year 1561 he set out from Asuncion with seventy soldiers, and having cut his way with

desperate valour through the opposing swarms of Indians, entered the town in triumph. The rivals fell into each other's arms and swore eternal friendship. Riquelme, who had a generous soul, buried the hatchet definitely, but Melgarejo only promised to abstain from acting against Riquelme during the troubles in the State.

Chaves, who had consolidated his position in his government, had now returned to Asuncion to fetch his family.

He was received with acclamation by the people, and possibly might have made himself the master of the place; but his ambitions were in his government and in his hopes of discovering rich mines.

His followers were so enthusiastic about the riches of his government that a general desire to emigrate towards Peru invaded every class. The Governor himself and Bishop Torres were amongst the most enthusiastic, and they at once set about making preparations for an expedition, undeterred by the bad luck Irala had encountered and quite unmindful of the sage advice that the Licentiate La Gasca had given, not to run off on futile expeditions after mines.

In 1564, the bishop and the Governor embarked, taking three hundred Spaniards with them and two thousand Indians.

Chaves, who certainly had great talent as a leader, marched by land, followed by two thousand Itatines, Indians from his government, whom he had persuaded to accompany him, and a detachment of Spaniards who had followed him from Lima,¹ after his visit to the viceroy.

After a prosperous journey, the joint forces entered the territory of Santa Cruz. Vergara instantly announced to Chaves that he was the sole Governor of

¹ "Histoire du Paraguay," Charlevoix.

every province of the River Plate. Chaves was not a man to sit down tamely under such a slight in his own government.

Dissensions immediately broke out, and Vergara's forces, left without guides, half starving and attacked at every step by the Itatines, who followed Chaves and obeyed him blindly, struggled on pitifully to reach the town of Santa Cruz, some ninety miles away. Hearing of Vergara's desperate straits, his want of food, and desperate losses both by disease and battle, the Indians of the whole province broke into revolt. Chaves, with fifty veterans, was obliged to march against them, as even his faithful Itatines seemed inclined to turn against him and throw their lot in with the other tribes.

He left his staunch lieutenant, Fernando de Salazar, in command, with orders at all costs to stop Vergara from getting to Peru.

Vergara dared not attack the veterans of Chaves with his raw levies, and so he took the course of sending off a messenger to the Viceroy of Peru, to complain of Chaves and to request he might be allowed to come to Lima, for he now found himself in the same position as Irala had been in during so many years, an elected Governor, with his election unconfirmed. When he arrived at Charcas a surprise awaited him. Not only was he not received with favour by the Audiencia, but he found himself accused of having caused the death of so many of his followers by leading them upon a wild-goose chase instead of staying quietly at home in his own governorship. The censure was deserved, for Vergara had before his eyes both the ill-starred expedition of Irala and the wise counsel of La Gasca, warning all governors not to leave their territories upon wild, ill-considered expeditions merely to search for mines.

The Audiencia de las Charcas, not daring to decide

so delicate a question, sent the unlucky Governor to Lima to be judged before the viceroy and the higher court. After considerable delay, the court decided that he had acted wrongly, and had been the cause of heavy losses to the crown in treasure and in men. It deprived him of his government, and to fill up the cup of his humiliation, sent him a prisoner to Spain.

During Vergara's trial, a certain Captain Juan Ortiz de Zárate had been intriguing with the Viceroy of Peru to be named Governor of the River Plate. His efforts were so successful that he was named provisional Governor with the condition that he should return to Spain to have his nomination regularly confirmed. He set off at once after appointing Felipe de Caceres¹ as his lieutenant in his absence, and was well received in Spain by Philip II., and his nomination was confirmed.

Caceres and Bishop Torres started back for Asuncion, passing by Chuquisaca, and although the outward attitude of Chaves was friendly to them, yet they perceived that all their movements were scrupulously watched.

They knew that Chaves was most jealous of his powers as Governor within the district that he ruled. So with great caution and accompanied by sixty soldiers as a guard, Caceres left Chuquisaca and began his long and arduous journey home.

Chaves with a strong force followed him immediately, under the pretext of protecting him.

What were his plans must remain a secret, for passing through the country of the Itatines he found them in revolt. With a small escort² of twelve soldiers and a trumpeter he entered a large Indian village, either to show he did not fear them, or from foolhardiness.

¹ Caceres had been one of the chief opponents of Nuñez.

² "Histoire du Paraguay," Father Charlevoix.

Hearing that the chiefs were all assembled at a council meeting, he got down from his horse to speak to them.

Several advanced as if to do him honour and conducted him to a well-appointed hut, where, as the day was very hot, he took his helmet off and stretched himself upon a hammock, to rest a little before proceeding to the meeting of the chiefs.

He had rested only a few minutes when an Indian,¹ stealing up stealthily behind him, dashed out his brains with a club. His men were massacred, and no one but the trumpeter, a lad called Alexander, was able to escape.

He, although wounded, sprang upon his horse, and dashing through the thickest of the Indian ranks, contrived to reach the Spanish camp.

So perished miserably one of the most adventurous and most brilliant of the conquistadores of the River Plate, in the year 1566.²

Except Valdivia, Chaves was almost the only one of the more prominent conquistadores to die a violent death at the hands of the Indians.

He died in early middle age, with his ambitions all unfulfilled, but with his foot on the first rungs of the ladder by which he would have climbed to power.

Ambitious to a fault, he had in a supreme degree the gift of leadership, and his one heroic action, when more than half his men forsook him, and he, so to speak, burned his boats, shows clearly his high courage and his intense belief in his own star.

Ruthless, but never cruel for the sake of cruelty, he was by far the most brilliant of the captains who

¹ This Indian is referred to in "La Argentina" (Rui Diaz de Guzman) as "El Cacique Porilla," a most fitting name, as "Porilla" in Spanish means a little club.

² "Histoire du Paraguay," Father Charlevoix.

came with Pedro de Mendoza at his first landing in the River Plate.

Inferior to Irala in steadiness and in sobriety, he far outshone him in the field both as a captain and an adventurer. Neither of the two was a man of either humane or liberal views in regard to their treatment of the Indians, but both were held in great respect by Christians and Indians alike. The one achievement Chaves has to his credit that has been permanent was the foundation of the town of Santa Cruz.

That keeps his memory green in the land in which he had so many and such strange adventures, dreamed so many dreams, and underwent a fate so tragical.

Herrera, in the true spirit of a court historian, says he was worthy¹ of remembrance for his exploits, and because he was the brother of Maestro Fray Diego de Chaves, of the Preaching Order, worthily confessor to the unconquered King Philip II. of glorious memory.

That, of course, may be so, just as it may be that the recording angel has erased the memory of the prudent king's considerable number of defects, including his great adventure to dethrone her whose stout heart was left untroubled either by Spaniards or by Turks.

The people of Asuncion saw in the fate of Chaves a judgment on him for his share in the conspiracy that ruined Nuñez. This, too, may well have been the case for all that any man can tell. What we do know is that it was imprudent to lie down to rest amongst the Itatines without a helmet and without setting a good watch.

¹ " . . . tan famoso capitan digno de memoria, por sus hechos, y por ser hermano del Maestro Fray Diego de Chaves, de la orden de Predicadores, dignamente confesor del Invictismo Rey Don Felipe Segundo de gloriosa memoria" (" Historia de las Indias," Herrera, Decada VIII., lib. v., cap. ii.).

CHAPTER XIV

THE death of Chaves and the wide-spread rebellion of the Indians left Caceres and Bishop Torres with their scanty forces in a most dangerous position.

Already jealousies and dissensions had broken out between them, for neither brooked the other in the supreme command.

The journey to Asuncion was long and arduous, and even before they could rejoin their ships upon the Paraguay presented dangers and perils not a few.

Dean Funes, with a humour that in this instance borders upon scepticism, remarks it became necessary¹ for them to have recourse to the visible protection of Heaven, in order to account for their defeat of the Indians, with the insufficient forces that they had.

Attacked on every side by hordes of Indians, their losses were immense. It was then a venerable personage,² it is not known if he were Santiago or San Blas, threw darts against the Indians.

Dean Funes, writing in 1816, makes rather light of this miraculous event, having apparently imbibed unconsciously the virus of Voltaireanism.

Rui Diaz de Guzman, of a robust age and faith, sees it a little differently, but with the same good sense that was exhibited by Bernal Diaz del Castillo in his celebrated dictum, "I, sinner that I am, did not see

¹ "Fue necesario recurrir a la visible proteccion del cielo, para conciliar su derrota con la debilidad de sus fuerzas" ("Ensayo de la Historia Civil del Paraguay," etc., Dean Funes, Lib. II., cap. ii., p. 197).

² "Se cuenta que un personaje venerable el que no se sabe si fue Santiago ó San Blas, arrojaba dardos contra los Indios" (Dean Funes).

the blessed Apostle Santiago; what I did see was Francisco de Morla on his good grey horse."

Writing as a soldier and a good Catholic, but still with the humour innate in all his countrymen, he gives a detailed and interesting account of the most curious event:

"The general strove to keep the baggage with the munitions, the women and the rest of the non-combatants all in good order in the middle of our host, guarded about with musketry.¹

"Our men had the advantage, though we had many wounded. And as the fight grew fiercer, the enemy suddenly commenced to flee, without our people being able to understand the cause . . . till from themselves (the Indians) we learned that the cause of their flight was that they could not face the fury and the daring of a knight in shining armour, who with such swiftness rode them down and speared them that he appeared no other than a thunderbolt.

"It was held certain that that knight was the Apostle Santiago or the blessed San Blas, the patron of the land. No matter who he was, the succour was from Almighty God, who could not brook that the good

¹ " . . . procurando el General llevar el bagage muy apretado y recogido en medio de la batalla, con las municiones, mugeres y demas gente que no era de pelea, guarnecido con muy buena arcabuceria, llevando los nuestros conocida ventaja. Aunque con muchos heridos, y apretando la pelea con valor comenzaron huir los enemigos repentinamente sin que los nuestros pudiesen entender la causa . . . hasta que de ellos mismos se supo que la causa de su huida fué el no poder resistir el furor y denuedo de un caballero, que lleno de resplandor, con tal velocidad los alanceaba que no parecia sino un rayo. Tuvo por cierto que aquel caballero fué el apostol Santiago ó el bien aventurado San Blas patron de aquella tierra, y como quiera que fuese el socorro fué del Altisimo Dios, que no permitia que pereciese alli, aquel buen pastor con sus ovejas, dandoles victoria de mas de 10,000 Indios. Lo cual sucedió a 12 de Noviembre de 1658 " ("La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman, Lib. II., cap. xiv., p. 143).

shepherd and his sheep should perish there, giving them the victory over ten thousand Indians. This happened on the 12th of November, 1568."

That is a better way to treat a miracle than in the carping spirit of the good Dean of Cordoba. The historian soldier¹ was thankful for the help, and guards himself like a good tactician by the phrase "no matter who he was." The faith, the sense and the simplicity of the confession that the succour came from Almighty God does his heart justice, and leaves his understanding unimpaired.

With him there is no mention of a venerable personage throwing darts. He knew, of course, that the knight clothed in shining armour could not be other than St. James of Compostela at his accustomed task of riding down the infidel when Spaniards were hard pressed. Thus he is depicted in a thousand Spanish churches on a somewhat long-backed white horse, who tramples on a turbaned Saracen, whilst the knight waves his sword.

The reference to San Blas is clearly of the nature of a compliment, for the miraculous event took place in his own "repartimiento," and without doubt one saint must certify another and not poach on his preserves.

The shepherd of the flock to whom Rui Diaz de Guzman refers was certainly Bishop Torres, for Caceres was not the kind of man that anyone could have imagined leading the Lord's sheep, but to the slaughter-house.

After the victory the little army camped upon a hill to rest and to get tidings of the missing general, for they had had no news of Chaves since they had started out from Santa Cruz. One evening suddenly, on a low hill close to their camp appeared two Indians,

¹ Rui Diaz de Guzman.

who shouted out to them and waved green branches in their hands. They said, "Spaniards, do not wait for Chaves, for he is dead, and all his days are finished."

When they had heard what the Indians had to say, they determined to send out two soldiers to speak¹ with them and find out how it was Chaves had met his fate. So two young countrymen went on foot well armed, and going a little off the road met with the Indians and were informed of what had taken place.

There was no further reason for delay, and forthwith Caceres and Bishop Torres set out for Asuncion. Their position was perilous in the extreme. The news of the death of Chaves had spread like wildfire, and in the extraordinary way that intelligence is passed on amongst the Indian tribes almost as quickly as by telepathy or wireless telegraphy, had got ahead of them. On every road, on every river and in every wood they were attacked with fury, and had to fight their way through countless ambushades. At last they reached Asuncion, decimated in numbers, exhausted by perpetual fighting and the hardships of the road. Caceres had proved himself an able leader; but in those days in times of difficulty there always seems to have arisen some captain worthy to command.

"This happened,"² as Rui Diaz de Guzman says in a phrase habitual to him, in the year 1569. Although the Guaranis had all been implicated in the general rising, several of their chiefs appeared in Asuncion to exculpate themselves. Caceres, who evidently had some diplomatic talent, though he did not believe them, yet received them favourably and signed a treaty with them, in which they swore to keep the peace and to be loyal to his government.

Caceres, though a skilled commander, had not the

¹ "A tomar lengua" ("La Argentina," cap. xiv.).

² "Lo cual sucedio" ("La Argentina").

gift possessed by Chaves of managing men and of inspiring confidence. Almost immediately on his return to Asuncion the long smouldering jealousy between himself and Bishop Torres broke into a flame. In many of the early conquests there had always been a rivalry betwixt the military and the Church, and particularly in Paraguay.

Generally the difference began owing to the efforts of the better churchmen to protect the Indians. In this case it was not so, for Bishop Torres does not seem ever to have troubled overmuch about his flock. Thus the contention resolved itself into a struggle between two chiefs for power, not very edifying, as one of them was by the very nature of his office, rather a spiritual than a temporal governor.

Caceres was a man of great ambition, bold,¹ rancorous, and inflexible, as he had shown himself in the affair of Alvar Nuñez, and without any scruples to attain his ends.

The bishop was a man of milder character, who probably would not have proceeded to extremities had he not been goaded on by his vicar-general, one Alonso de Segovia,² a fiery-tempered priest skilled in intrigue.

Upon the pretext that certain acts of Caceres impinged upon the episcopal authority and were subversive of his dignity, Torres launched a violent and indiscreet Philippic against the Governor and his ministers. Caceres, who thought himself secure, as he disposed of all the military power, treated the bishop's censure with contempt. Still he did not neglect to strengthen his position by all means in his

¹ " . . . Inflexible, audaz y rencoroso " (Dean Funes, Lib. II., cap. iii., p. 199).

² " Alonso de Segovia, hombre fogoso, intrigante y adventido " (Dean Funes).

power. Though Caceres had been a bitter enemy of Nuñez, and Alonso de Riquelme was one of the few of his partisans still left in Paraguay, his enmity against the bishop was so great that Caceres did not hesitate to try and bring Riquelme to his side.

The city of Guayrá, to which place Riquelme had repaired to succour Melgarejo, was once more in confusion, this time from a most curious cause. It was not menaced by the Indians, but by a curious folly that had infected its own citizens.

In that part of the country they had discovered some curious round stones, about the size of melons, that are known locally as "cocos de mina," a phrase that may be roughly rendered "mine nuts," for, being balls of flint, they looked like cocoanuts.

The description¹ that Rui Diaz de Guzman gives of them in his "Argentina" is exact and curious :

"These curious stones are often found upon the surface in rocky places; but more often lie a short way underground in sandy soils, and now and then burst with a report like that of a small cannon, and cast the crystals that have been tightly packed inside them in showers on the ground."

Yellow and purple, opaline and green and violet, they look like topazes and amethysts, as if a lapidary's tray had been upset upon the mountain-side, all

¹ "Habiendose descubierto en aquella tierra unas piedras cristalinas que se crian dentro de unos cocos de pedernal muy apretados y juntos, con puntas piramidales de diferentes colores, unas moradas, otras verdes y amarillas, y otras mas claras y cristalinas, todas finas y resplandientes como cristales, la tuvieron en aquella tierra por piedras preciosas y de gran valor . . . y como los pareciese que poseian la mayor riqueza del mundo, intentacon desamparar el pueblo y ganar la costa del mar para irse a Castilla con sus mugeres é hijos, y determinados secretamente á poner lo en efecto, no pudo ser tan secreto que no fuesen sentidos y incurso en este fruto que al fin vinieron á concluir bajo grandes juramentos, que se aquietasen y no harian niugun movimiento, con lo cual fueron sueltos y libres de la prision" ("La Argentina," cap. xvi., p. 144).

crystalline and shining in the sun. Their facets reverberate the light, like the cut glass in a Venetian chandelier. When the citizens of Guayrá first came upon them, they took them all for precious stones, and thought the riches of Golconda lay scattered at their feet. All was confusion, and the people instantly wished to leave the town and return home to Spain with their families, taking as many of the precious gems as they found possible.

They seemed to have an inkling that the Governor would not look favourably upon their project, for their arrangements were made secretly. However, news of what was in the wind came to Riquelme's ears, and straightway he threw the ringleaders into prison, and forced the others to give up their plan, making them swear to make no movement towards abandoning the town.

This done, and when their ardour had calmed down a little, he freed the leaders, thinking his first show of severity had intimidated them.

Nothing was further from the truth, so secretly one night forty of the chief citizens, well armed, went to Riquelme's house with a petition all duly written out,¹ demanding that he should appoint a leader to conduct them to the coast, for they were quite resolved to go to Spain to tell His Majesty the King what enormous wealth the crown possessed in the province of Guayrá.

The Governor answered with some humour, a

¹ "Requeriendole por escrito" ("La Argentina," Diaz de Guzman, p. 144).

It was curious the love the Spaniards of those days had for written petitions on such occasions.

Cortés, Quesada, Orellana and many other of the conquistadores were confronted with written petitions, in cases of mutiny and times of difficulty, drawn up by men to whom writing could not have come easily, and amongst whom paper must have been a very scarce commodity.

dangerous thing to have in one in his position, as he was soon to learn, that he would do what he judged best for the royal service.

This answer drove the people furious, and so one night, assembling in great force, well armed, they seized upon the Governor and made him prisoner. The malcontents were led by a priest¹ called Escalera.

The Church in South America often organized revolts against the civil power, and it may well be that the Governor's dry answer did not exactly turn away the anger of the clergy of Guayrá, for humour² always has been as the sin of witchcraft to the Church.

Now that Riquelme was a prisoner, and fortified by the presence of the priest Escalera, the people then seized all the vessels they could lay their hands upon and set off for the coast.

This time, with the shrewd common sense the Spaniards often show in the affairs of life, as distinct from those of business, they elected as their leader for their exodus, not the priest Escalera, but an English heretic, one Nicholas Colman.³

This English miscreant, no doubt a follower either of the gross, wine-bibbing Luther, or of the blood-stained Calvin, perhaps was skilled in navigation, and even God-fearing Catholic Christians may well be pardoned in their choice of a captain who had been bred up to the sea, before a priest⁴ who had his living from the altar's foot.

The Governor was left alone with a few personal friends.

¹ "Un clerigo, llamado Escalera" ("La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman).

² Philosophers have not yet furnished an answer, why it is that humour always excites the fury of fools.

³ "Nombrando por su caudillo a un ingles que se llamaba Nicholas Colman" ("La Argentina," p. 145).

⁴ The Spanish phrase runs, "de pie de altar."

At once he sent for help to Caceres, who despatched Rui Diaz Melgarejo to succour him.

This captain overtook the fugitives and brought them back as prisoners to Guayrá. Most certainly both Escalera and Colman should have been punished, and it is to the credit of Rui Diaz Melgarejo that he did not at once string up the Englishman.

His clemency may have been instigated by his long enmity to Riquelme, whose pride he mortified by pardoning all the fugitives, an act that naturally made them his partisans.

This general pardon gained him more than mere followers, for he lay under excommunication of the Church both for the slaughter of his wife and for the murder of a priest. However, in Guayrá, the Bishop of Asuncion had a vicar-general,¹ one Paniagua.

This functionary absolved Melgarejo, either from gratitude or under duress, but his decision was held invalid at Asuncion.

Order restored, the rivals could not live together in such a little place as was Guayrá, therefore Riquelme, finding himself the weaker, determined to return to Asuncion. With five and forty followers who had espoused his side, he set out on the dangerous road.

The Indians, seeing his force was small and not well armed, attacked him on the path from every point of vantage, and he had literally to fight his way at every step through the vast marshes and the woods.

Finally they beset him in great force where the road passed right through the middle of a wood called Erespoco, some twenty leagues before he reached Asuncion. The trail was narrow,² and the Indians from both sides of it poured in continual flights of arrows at the column on the march.

¹ "El Provisor-General del Obispo, Paniagua."

² "Dandoles de un lado a otro muchas rociadas de flecheria."

The Spaniards, covering themselves with their bucklers, doggedly pushed on until they gained the plain. Then, Riquelme, with the six horsemen that were with him, wheeled and charged the Indians and disengaged his men.

Next day the little column, starving and with many wounded, reached a point known as "Las Boqueras," where the road breaks off to Santa Cruz.¹ Riquelme was surprised to see fresh tracks² of horses and of cows. At night they caught three Indians, who explained to them that Caceres and the bishop had returned recently from the frontiers of Peru with a large herd of horses and of cows.

This was unpleasant news for Riquelme to receive, for Caceres had always been his enemy since the days of Nuñez. The Provisor-General who had accompanied him was also in alarm, for he well knew that he had gone beyond his power in freeing Melgarejo from his excommunication, and he had hoped the bishop was still absent in Peru.

Their fears were groundless, for both the bishop and the Governor were in need of friends, and did not look too closely into what had passed during their absence from Paraguay.

Caceres had heard that Zárate had been appointed in Spain Governor of the River Plate. The news seems to have been brought by a vessel sailing to the island of San Gabriel, a proof, though Buenos Aires was still abandoned, there was continual communication of some sort or other between the mother country and the colony.

So Caceres despatched a fleet of brigantines to

¹ Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in Bolivia.

² Those who have been in places such as was then "Las Boqueras," and suddenly come on fresh tracks of horses, when they thought they might as easily have come upon the trail of elephants, know what Riquelme and his followers felt.

watch the mouth of the great estuary and get the first news of any fleet that might arrive from Spain.

What were his real motives is difficult to see.

He knew that with the arrival of the new Governor, Juan Ortiz de Zárate, his lease of power was at an end, for he could hardly have expected to be able to treat Zárate as he had treated Nuñez in the past. He may have hoped to detach some of the vessels of the fleet by promising the crews and captains grants of Indians and of lands, or he may have thought of making terms with the new Governor and sharing the command.

No vessels that he had at his disposal could have coped for a minute with the well-appointed fleet that was certain to arrive. Thus he could hardly have expected to be able to close the river to the advance of Zárate. What the crews of the home-built brigantines must have endured knocking about that stormy estuary for several weeks, manned as they were chiefly by men not bred up to the sea and who had lived for years in the soft climate of Asuncion, it is easy to divine.

After enduring many hardships and finding nothing they returned, leaving a demi-john with letters in it buried beneath a cross that they erected in the island of San Gabriel.¹ Then they went back to Paraguay "sore buffeted."

Caceres, who now wished to stand well with Zárate when he arrived, insisted that Riquelme should go back to his government of Guayrá, as Zárate had ordered him before he sailed for Spain. That, as Riquelme knew, was a death sentence, for Melgarejo, when he had once more got him in his power, was not a man in the least likely to be merciful.

Riquelme set out much against his will with fifty

¹ "En las islas de San Gabriel dejó escritas unas cartas de aviso, metidas en una botija, al pie de una cruz" ("La Argentina," p. 146).

soldiers, most of whom had wives and families in Guayrá and who were anxious to return. As this was not a large force for such a journey, Caceres sent a hundred arquebusiers to escort it for the first five and thirty leagues, as that was the most dangerous part of the whole road.

At the great marsh of Coropati¹ the Indians attacked the expedition. After a smart action the arquebusiers drove the Indians back. Then they returned to Asuncion, and Riquelme with his little band of fifty set his face towards Guayrá.

After some days of travelling he reached an Indian village called Maracayá, some five days distant from Guayrá, and camped there for the night. Not being certain how he would be received by Melgarejo, he sent on messengers offering him friendship.

Although Melgarejo owed so many favours to Riquelme, his ancient enmity that had subsisted since the days of Alvar Nuñez still was unappeased.

Secretly he assembled all his friends and partisans and got himself elected Captain-General and Chief Justice over Riquelme's head.

Then he sent out men he could count upon to wean Riquelme's men from their allegiance to him, a thing they compassed easily enough, as nearly all Riquelme's men had left their families in Guayrá, and above all things wished to return to them without a fight. Melgarejo, with a hundred men, set out by night and by the break of day surrounded all the camp. All except four of his followers left Riquelme, who, seeing himself helpless, asked to be allowed to come on to

¹ Curupaiti, as the marsh is called to-day, is an excellent place for an ambush. A narrow path between trees leads into the marsh, a great expanse of hummocky ground overgrown with high grasses.

The first step takes a horse up to its knees, and the passage of the marsh takes a couple of hours even to men travelling light.

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Guayrá, where he had left his children and his wife, and then return to Asuncion with his four soldiers and his family.

Melgarejo answered that the journey was impossible for such a little band, for the Indians would surely massacre them, and that Riquelme should come on to his own house, which he could do in perfect safety. To this he pledged his word.

No sooner had Riquelme done so, than Melgarejo seized upon him and sent him to a special prison that he had prepared with a stockade¹ around it.

There he remained a year, without news of his wife and family.

Then, as the people of Guayrá were all indignant at his treatment, he was removed to another prison forty leagues away, deep buried in the woods. There also he remained a year, until "our Lord was pleased² to liberate him."

¹ "En una mazmorra prevenida y fortificada de fuertes maderas."

² "Hasta que Nuestro Señor fue servido libérale de esta prision" ("La Argentina," cap. xviii., p. 149).

CHAPTER XV

MEANWHILE in Asuncion the dissensions between Caceres, the Governor, and the bishop had become acute. Each party went about well armed,¹ and neither ventured into the streets where its opponents had the majority. Only the cathedral was neutral ground, to which both sides resorted to hear Mass, and for a long time no one was molested either in entering or going out of it.

Things came to such a pass that no one could afford not to take sides either with one or other of the parties.

Curiously enough, many of the clergy² and ecclesiastics were against their bishop, and the greater portion of the soldiers against their general.

A pretty situation and edifying to the Indians, who saw their conquerors engaging in precisely the same kind of strife to which they themselves always had been accustomed, before the Spaniards came to show them the true faith.

Luckily for Caceres and Bishop Torres, the Guaranis of Paraguay were above all things peaceful and averse from strife. Had they resembled the fierce and warlike Mexicans, or had the country been as difficult as is Peru, instead of being generally flat with a few ranges of gently rising hills, the Spaniards might easily have been killed to the last man.

¹ " . . . vivian los unos y los otros con gran cuidado y recato " (" La Argentina," Lib. III.).

² " Muchos clerigos y eclesiasticos eran contra su obispo, y la mayor parte de los seculares contra su general " (" La Argentina," Lib. III., cap. xviii., p. 149).

Caceres arrested several of the bishop's partisans and threw them into prison, amongst these the Vicar-General¹ of Asuncion, Alonso de Segovia. This man from the first had stirred up strife, and Caceres, who meditated another voyage to the mouth of the River Plate to search for tidings of the Adelantado Zárate, no doubt thought that Segovia's arrest would keep things quiet in his absence from the town.

Events proved that he was deceived.

Once more he sailed from Asuncion, and once again he found no traces either of a fleet or any Spaniards at the isles of Flores or San Gabriel. So he again left letters under a high cross.

In these he advised whoever found them to make war upon the Indians² and give no quarter to them. His policy was foolish in the extreme, especially in this case, for as there were no permanent Spanish settlements about the estuary of the River Plate the Indians could have closed the passage up the river to Asuncion.

As he had taken the vicar-general, Alonso de Segovia, a prisoner with him in his fleet, he now determined to banish him to Tucuman.³

Caceres then tried to ascend the River Salado, as in spite of all his political troubles, like a true conquistador, he lost no opportunity of opening up new territory. On this occasion his object was twofold, for he wished to reach Tucuman with his prisoner by a road on which he would encounter none of the bishop's partisans.

He struggled up against the current, rowing and poling, till at last the river narrowed and the overhanging trees stopped further navigation and forced him to return, bringing the vicar-general with him.

¹ El Provisor.

² "Mandó romper con los Indios naturales del rio sin admitirles paz ni amistad alguna" ("La Argentina," p. 150).

³ Tucuman had been conquered and settled from Peru, but it fell under the jurisdiction of the Governor of the River Plate

After four months' absence and many hardships he arrived once more in Paraguay.

The bishop, like a prudent churchman, had lost no chance of strengthening himself against the mammon of unrighteousness, and Caceres found himself in a minority, with his life in danger every day.

Still his own party was considerable, and disdaining to make terms he sent out secretly and arrested several of the bishop's partisans. Amongst them was a gentleman of Seville, one Don Pedro de Esquivel. Without a trial and apparently without a motive, Caceres had him beheaded and his head stuck up on a pole. At this act the people were alarmed,¹ says Rui Diaz de Guzman, but does not comment on it. Caceres no doubt thought to strike terror in the opposing faction, but only lost himself more followers.

He then put out an edict forbidding anyone to aid or hold communication with the bishop. The latter, seeing himself in peril, at once took sanctuary in the monastery of Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes, and probably by so doing saved his life. Caceres instantly blockaded him, setting a guard of fifty soldiers at the monastery gate, but he dared not attempt to take the bishop out by force, as he well knew that he would lose his followers if he attempted it. Months passed, and all the time Asuncion was like a beleaguered city, the followers of Caceres and of the bishop fighting, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, in the streets. At last, in 1572, the bishop secretly assembled a chosen band of faithful followers. These he lodged in the house of a Franciscan, one Fray Francisco del Campo, a man² fit for his purpose. This purposeful and subtle friar prepared a *coup de main*, as he, being himself

¹ "Con lo cual todo el pueblo se turbó" ("La Argentina").

² "Hombre a proposito para el efecto" ("La Argentina," p. 150).

"religious," quite naturally had not the scruples Caceres had as to the holiness of sanctuaries.

Caceres was accustomed, being a good Catholic Christian, to hear Mass frequently, and so it fell about that on a Monday morning he repaired to the cathedral,¹ followed by his guards. As he was kneeling praying before the railing of the chief chapel he heard a noise of armed men entering the church by all three doors. Rising from his knees, he drew his sword and went into the chapel at the same time as the bishop came out from the sacristy in his robes and with his vicar-general at his side, holding a crucifix in his hand and shouting loudly, "Long live the Faith of Christ!"

His followers fell upon the general and wounded him severely, his guard standing by hypnotized by the pious war-cry, to which they answered, like good Catholics, "Viva!" One man, an hidalgo from Estremadura, called Gonzalo de Altamirano, was proof against the cry, and stood up manfully in defence of Caceres.

His heresy cost him his life. Faith was justified by works, and Caceres, after being disarmed, was dragged by his hair to the monastery of Las Mercedes. The bishop had him heavily ironed and put him into a strong prison that he had prepared. Not content with these precautions, he had a stout chain fastened to his fetters that passed through a hole made in the wall to his own room, where it was made secure in a

¹ "Saliendo el General un Lunes por la mañana a oír misa a la iglesia mayor acompañendole su guardia, entrando dentro y haciendo oracion fuera de la reja de la capilla mayor, oyó un gran tumulto y ruido de gente que entraba en dicha iglesia por todas las tres puertas. El General se levantó y viendo tanta gente armada se entró en la capilla mayor echando mano a la espada, al tiempo que el Obispo salia de la sacristia revestido, con un Cristo en la mano y junto a el provisor diciendo a grandes voces, 'Viva la Fe de Cristo.'"

great wooden billet, fastened¹ with an iron lock, of which the bishop kept the key.

The bishop evidently was determined to leave nothing to chance, for in addition to these precautions against escape Caceres had guards set over him, both inside and outside his cell. These he had to pay for out of his own pocket,² an added aggravation that he himself had also entailed on Alvar Nuñez when he had him in his power.

A certain Martin Suarez de Toledo, thinking the occasion propitious, suddenly appeared in Asuncion escorted by a troop of arquebusiers, and forced the council to elect him Captain-General of the province.

He governed cruelly and enriched himself, chiefly, with the plunder of the estates of Caceres.

One of the chief defects of Spanish rule in the Americas at that time was the necessity that governors who had been elected by their fellow-citizens were under, to return to Spain to get their powers confirmed. During their absence social turmoils almost invariably broke out, as happened now during the absence of the Adelantado Zárate.

For a full year the vindictive bishop kept Caceres in prison, during which time he suffered many privations³ and was cruelly ill-used. Thus, as Rui Diaz de Guzman remarks, he paid in person for all that he had made Nuñez suffer in the past.

News now reached Asuncion that the Adelantado Zárate had arrived from Spain with all his powers confirmed, and with the title of Captain-General. This news

¹ "Con dos pares de grillos y una muy gruesa cadena, que atravesaba una pared al aposento del Obispo y venia a cerrar en un muy grueso cepo de madera con un muy fuerte candado, cuya llave tenia el Obispo."

² "Ademas de los guardas que dentro y fuera tenia a su costa, manteniendoles de sus bienes."

³ "Asi le tenian mas de un año padeciendo este caballero muchas molestias e inhumanidades" ("La Argentina").

was not too welcome to the bishop, who found himself in the same position as that of Irala in the affair of Nuñez.

He had a prisoner that he dared not execute, and still less dared to set at liberty. At any moment the new Governor might arrive, so he determined to send Caceres to Spain.

As there was no one in Asuncion on whom the bishop could rely to guard his prisoner on the voyage, he sent off a messenger to Rui Diaz Melgarejo at Guayrá, knowing that he and Caceres were enemies.

One Herman Gonzalez was the messenger, who embarked in a new caravel, built at Asuncion, with thirty followers.

Dropping down the Paraguay to where the town of Corrientes stands to-day, he followed up the Parana until he reached the port of Guayrá, which was about three leagues below the town. There he lighted bonfires¹ so that the people of the town should know he had arrived.

Rui Diaz Melgarejo did not like the business, but he was forced to obey the bishop's orders and set off for Asuncion.

No sooner had he left Guayrá than the inhabitants all rose against his rule, and going to the prison where Riquelme was confined set him at liberty. Then they elected him their Governor.

He,² after being solemnly received, began his governorship and gave the city and the land, the peace that they desired.

When Melgarejo arrived at Asuncion, the bishop lost no time about embarking in his new caravel, being determined not to lose hold of Caceres till they arrived in Spain.

¹ "Hicieron sus fuegos para que les acudiese gente" ("La Argentina," p. 153).

² It is his son, Rui Diaz de Guzman, who writes.

Rui Diaz Melgarejo, who, as a soldier, probably knew nothing of the sea, he named the captain, not from his fitness for the post, but because past events called him with urgency¹ to Rome.

Before he started on his voyage the bishop sent a gentleman of Biscay, Juan de Garay by name, to found a town at the fort of Sancti Espiritu, on the best site that he could find.²

This gentleman, destined to play so great a part in the future of the River Plate, set off with eighty soldiers, most of them born in Paraguay. In 1573 he started from Asuncion with horses and with cattle for his new settlement, travelling by land, accompanied by a vessel that kept up with his march, escorting several boats. The bishop started with him in his new caravel, and so they journeyed to the mouth of the River Paraguay in company. There they separated.

The caravel with the bishop and his prisoner Caceres sailed safely to the island of San Vicente in Brazil. There the Portuguese, always alert to sow dissension amongst their Spanish neighbours, secretly planned to liberate Caceres. Their plot was soon discovered and the prisoner more strictly guarded than before.

Just at this juncture an urgent request from the new Governor Zárate arrived, and Melgarejo was obliged to join him. Before he started back towards the River Plate, he left injunctions to a man he could rely on to conduct Caceres to Spain. Hardly had Melgarejo left the isle of San Vicente when Bishop Torres was stricken with a fever, and weighed down by years, expired.

Caceres arrived in Spain in almost similar conditions to those which had awaited Alvar Nuñez so many years before.

¹ He still lay under sentence of excommunication.

² "Adonde mas convenia."

His two accusers had been removed, the one by death, the other by the pressure of events. Thus Caceres found himself free to present his case in his own fashion before the Council of the Indies, and was triumphantly acquitted by that court. His active life was ended, and Alvar Nuñez was avenged.

Whether the two ever met in Seville, where Nuñez may have been still living in honourable retirement, is not recorded by the chroniclers.

Garay followed the right bank of the Parana by land as far as where the Rio de los Quiloazas falls into it.

Up to this time (1573) Asuncion and Paraguay had been the largest factors in the new colony, and though the Governors all bore the title of Captain-General of the River Plate, the lower reaches of the Parana were not inhabited by Spaniards, who at the most maintained some trifling settlements, either at the islands of San Gabriel or at the mouth of the San Juan. As these were both in what is now the State of Uruguay, the left bank of the River Plate was uninhabited by Europeans.

With the expedition of Garay to found the town at Sancti Espiritu, the interest shifted gradually further down the river, until it centred in the new town of Buenos Aires, after Garay had once more founded it. All went well with the expedition of Garay, and in due course he founded Sancti Espiritu,¹ about three leagues from the Parana, amongst a tribe of friendly Indians known as the Quiloazas.

He seems to have had the gift of conciliating the wild tribes as Nuñez had it, a gift so often lacking in the conquistadores, who carried in the right hand a sword and in the left a crucifix. Garay founded his town after the Spanish fashion of those times, driving

¹ It is now Santa Fé.

straight streets into the plain and then intersecting them with cross streets like a chessboard, a style that has remained in South America down to the present day. He then surrounded it with a strong palisade, with towers at all four angles—in fact, a town such as may be seen depicted in all the contemporary histories of the conquest of America.

Then he set out to take a list of all the tribes, just as we do to-day in Africa in districts where the hut tax prevails. The Indians not unnaturally were alarmed, and perceived in his census an attempt against their liberty. In fact it was so, and their penetration had not erred. They met it with a feigned submission, but all the time secretly gathered forces to destroy him.

Garay was not deceived, and sent the colonists on board of all the boats they had, mooring the brigantine in the middle, and sending up a soldier to the cross-tree to keep watch.

In the early morning the soldier hailed the deck and said he saw the whole plain black with Indians, signalling to one another by means of fires. All stood to arms expecting an attack, when once again the soldier hailed the deck.

He said, "I see a horseman who is charging with his lance." Garay called out to him he must be dreaming; but the man replied, "I see another horseman. . . . I see four, five, six, and all are charging on the Indians."

Garay's astonishment was great, for he had no idea from whence the horsemen came, and Santiago, when he made his periodical appearances, was always seen alone.

So well the horsemen charged that in a short time all the Indians fled, leaving their dead and wounded on the plain. When all was over and the six horsemen,

not having seen the soldier on the mast, were riding off, Garay despatched an Indian¹ who knew Spanish with a letter to them, asking them to explain their opportune appearance on the scene. They read his letter, and returning with the Indian, informed Garay that they were soldiers of Don Geronimo Luis de Cabrera, the Governor of Tucuman.

They told him also that a week ago, upon the day of San Geronimo, Governor Cabrera had founded a new town, to which he gave the name of Cordoba. They themselves had been sent out on an expedition to explore the country. Cordoba is some sixty leagues from Santa Fé (Sancti Espiritu), and it is certainly a strange coincidence that they should both have been founded on the same day, without the founders having heard of one another's presence in the territory.

The soldiers further told Garay that Governor Cabrera claimed all the territory down to the Parana and five and twenty leagues of river frontage from the mouth of the Caracañal, where years ago Gaboto had set up his fort.

In a few days Cabrera came himself to Santa Fé, and informed Garay in courteous terms of what his soldiers had already told him.

Garay, who was a prudent man and knew his forces were inferior to those Cabrera had at his disposal, protested quietly, saying he was one of the ancient conquerors of the River Plate, and that he held that all the territory up to the Andes must of necessity fall under the jurisdiction of the new Governor who was coming out from Spain. His firmness probably saved the Argentine Republic from dismemberment, for as Peru was far the richer in those days, was better peopled and in better touch with Spain, without his

¹ "Un Indio ladino."

protest Cordoba and Tucuman, with Salta, Jujuy, and all the upper provinces, would have remained a portion of Peru.

As the two Governors were disputing a canoe arrived from the "Islands of Buenos Aires."¹ In it came an Indian chief, by name Yamandu, who brought a letter from Don Juan Ortiz de Zárate, telling Garay that he had been appointed Adelantado of the River Plate, and that his fleet was anchored off the islands of San Gabriel.

He further told him that he was very short of food to feed his men, and found himself pressed hard by the Charrua Indians, and begged for instant help. From the first days the Spaniards entered the River Plate the Charruas had been hostile to them. They massacred Solis, attacked Gaboto, and had cut off innumerable small detachments that had landed on the right bank of the great estuary in what is now the territory of Uruguay. Except the tribes of the Gran Chaco, the Charruas were the most savage² of all the Indians that the Spaniards had encountered in this part of the New World. Eventually they were exterminated; but traces of their blood remains in many a

¹ "Las Islas de Buenos Aires."

² Barco de la Centenera describes them in his long rhyming chronicle "La Argentina":

"Tan sueltos son que alcançan
Corriendo por los campos los venados
Tras fuertes avestruces se avalançan
Hasta de ellos se ven apoderados
Con unas bolas que usan los alcanzan
Y tienen en la mano tal destreça
Que aciertan con la bola en la cabeça
A cien pasos que es cosa monstruosa
Apunta el Charruaha adonde quiere. . . ."

(Canto x., p. 36.)

(In Barcia's collection, "Historiadores Primitivos de las Indias Occidentales." Madrid, Año MDCCXLIX.)

Gaicho of the Republic of Uruguay, especially towards the frontiers of Brazil.

Zárate sent Garay his appointment as Lieutenant-General and named him also his chief magistrate. From that time both the men were friends.

Garay himself, although it is not known with certainty at what date he arrived in South America, yet was an old conqueror. He must have been well known and trusted, for Bishop Torres had selected him to found the town at Sancti Espiritu, and Zárate, upon his first arrival, evidently had heard him praised and spoken of as a man on whom he could rely. Born in Bilbao of a noble family, it is not known with certainty at what date, he came probably of one of those stout Biscayan noble houses whose patrimony was the sword; most likely he was little burdened with much wealth.

His position in America now was made, and from that time down to his death he played a leading part in the advancement of the River Plate. From the first he seems to have set his heart upon refounding Buenos Aires, being apparently convinced that Asuncion was too far from the sea to be the capital of such great territories.

Garay quite naturally availed himself of the favour shown to him by Zárate to get a decree against the Governor of Cordoba, and from that time both Cordoba and Tucuman were separated from Peru. At first they did not acquiesce without a struggle, and took their case before the Audiencia de las Charcas. Their delegates and Garay appeared before the court, and their claims were disallowed.

Zárate, the new Governor, arrived at a time when the fortunes of the colony were at the lowest point that they had touched since the abandonment of Buenos Aires in Mendoza's time. All Paraguay was in con-

fusion, miserably governed by the usurper Martin Suarez de Toledo. The only settlement in the estuary of the River Plate was at the little islands of San Gabriel, and Buenos Aires was in the possession of the Querandis, as it had been before the coming of the Spaniards to the New World. The new Governor, Juan Ortiz de Zárate, was not the man to cope with such a desperate state of things. Fortunate in early life, from the moment that he meddled with the affairs of the River Plate his luck deserted him.

When he returned to Spain to solicit the governorship, fortune seemed to smile upon him.

Philip II. received him favourably and entered into a capitulation with him, much after the same fashion as his father, the Emperor Charles V., had done with the ill-fated Pedro de Mendoza when he first sailed to found the colony. By the capitulation, the historian Lozano says, Zárate bound himself to conditions that were absurd in view of his small means.

He was to push the exploration of the country to its furthest limits. This would have entailed the exploration both of the Gran Chaco and of Patagonia, regions then quite unknown and unexplored. He bound himself to take with him two hundred families, three hundred soldiers, four thousand cows, four thousand sheep, five hundred goats, and three hundred mares.

All these were to be embarked in four small vessels and a tender.¹ Why Philip entered into such a bargain is difficult to understand, for his advisers must surely have informed him of its absurdity.

Zárate set sail on October 17th, 1572, from San Lucar, the port of embarkation in those days for all the expeditions to the Americas.

So ill was he provided for the voyage, so full his

¹ Un patache.

vessels all were packed, and so bad were the water and the stores, that many died almost before they had got to sea. The pilots were unskilful, and the weather stormy to a degree almost unheard of, so that the expedition, says Barco de la Centenara,¹ who accompanied it, looked as if doomed to shipwreck in advance.

More by good luck than by good seamanship the fleet arrived at the islands of San Gabriel, one of the vessels having put into San Vicente. The first act of the new Governor was to beg help from Rui Diaz Melgarejo, who at once desisted from his voyage to Spain and came to his assistance at San Gabriel. Zárate then sent off the letter to Garay imploring his assistance and naming him Lieutenant-Governor.

For the moment Garay was unable to go to the assistance of the unlucky Zárate, owing to a revolt of the Indians in Santa Fé and Cordoba under a celebrated witch-doctor called Oberá, who announced himself as Christ.

The episode is one of the most curious of the kind in all the conquest of America.

One Martin Gonzalez, an idiot priest,² so the good Archdeacon of Buenos Aires, Barco de la Centenera, dubs him, with all that disregard of diplomatic caution that consciousness of benefit of clergy often carries with it, had set about to preach to the Indians the strict letter of the faith.

Much did he tell them about the Tower of Babel, a subject certain to appeal to them, for every fraction of a tribe had its own dialect, and much of David and Goliath, and how the little Israelite slew the great Philistine with sling and stone, as cowardly as if villain-

¹ "En tres navios mal aderezados al parecer, a muerte condenados" ("La Argentina," Barco de la Centenera, Canto viii., p. 17).

² "Clerigo idiota" ("La Argentina," Barco de la Centenera, Canto xx., p. 74).

ous saltpetre had been already dugged out of the bowels of the earth.

This doctrine was perhaps a little strong for new-made Christians, for Barco de la Centenera wisely observes that there are beautiful¹ and lofty mysteries unsafe to treat of to the Indians.

The letter killeth, especially when the understanding is not prepared for it, and so it proved with Oberá. This heathen evidently took the foolish preacher's words too literally, and saw himself a David slaying the Spanish Philistines with sling and stone, weapons that every Indian could use. His very name² of Oberá may have contributed to make him think he was destined for a liberator, for it appears that it meant Splendour.

Though Oberá had been baptized³ a Christian, Peter, George, or John must have seemed poor indeed to him beside the effulgency of his tribal name.

He evidently had grasped the chief dogmas of the faith, for he set it about that his mother was a virgin, a blasphemy so awful that the good archdeacon's hand trembled⁴ to write it down.

Soon all the Indians flocked to him, whether to solve the mystery of his birth or from the natural desire of liberty inherent in mankind is hard to say.

When he had gathered many hundreds of them into a little plain, he set them all to dance and sing his praises, though the archdeacon does not inform us if Oberá had them appparelled in one livery. So well they sang and danced that they forgot to sow their crops, and soon a famine raged, which Oberá, with

¹ "Sin esto, otros misterios altos, bellos. Que al Indio no se sufre tratar dellos" (Canto xx.).

² "... que quiere decir, Resplandor" (Note on p. 74, Canto xx., "La Argentina," Barco de la Centenera).

³ "El Baptismo tenia de Christiano."

⁴ "La mano esta temblando de escrivillo."

the true insight of the politician into human nature, laid at the Spaniards' door.

His son, called Guiraró,¹ he nominated Pope, and thus secured the keys of heaven in his own family.

Against this heresiarch, Garay advanced with all the forces he could gather, and met the Indian army near a town called Ygpaname. Oberá, either by his witchcraft, knowledge of the gospel, or his sophistry, had gained such power over his followers that they all thought themselves invincible.

As soon as Garay's scant forces came in sight, four stout Indians advanced, and having thrown their bows and arrows on the ground, challenged four Christians to fight. As was to be looked for, the four Christian champions vanquished the miscreants, and slew two of them. The other two returned to Oberá, both badly wounded, to complain that all his spells had not succeeded in making them invulnerable.

With all his forces Oberá retired into the woods, followed closely by Garay, amongst whose men rode the Archdeacon Barco de la Centenera, fully equipped for war. He seems to have been a martial priest, praying to God and striking home with his mace, as goes the Spanish adage,² for he says with pride, "I never let an expedition³ go without me, no matter how dangerous it might be."

Although Garay with his seasoned soldiers easily vanquished the Indian rabble, Oberá himself was still at large, and whilst he was at large the Spaniards could not hope for peace.

The glory of his capture was reserved for the

¹ Guiraró = Palo Amargo—*i.e.*, Bitter Stick—not a bad name for a Pope.

² "A Dios rogando y con la maza dando."

³ "Jamás dejé de entrar qualquiera entrada aunque fuese el peligro te meroso" (Canto xii., p. 42).

Church militant, and the good archdeacon dilates upon his prowess with some complacency.

As he was riding through the woods, an Indian suddenly appeared carrying a cross and caught hold of his stirrup,¹ in the same way the Moors in wild parts of Morocco take refuge with some powerful man, kissing his stirrup and his foot.

The Indian proved to be a man whom Oberá had named one of his priests. This man, with two of his companions, told the archdeacon of where the chief was hiding, and the archdeacon, nothing loth, sallied out at daybreak, only accompanied by a page.

He dressed himself in white, why, he omits to say. Perhaps on account of the hot weather, or to escape observation in the early dawn. Upon his head he wore a great straw hat, riding his horse, as he expressly says, "a la gineta"²—that is, with short stirrup leathers on the Moorish saddle, a style in those days usually reserved for warriors. He and his companion held their guns ready for the first alarm, and rode prepared for all eventualities. So well he laid his measures that at nightfall he came on Oberá and took him prisoner. Then, with his captive securely bound, he returned in triumph to the town.

With the capture of Oberá the war was over, owing to the daring of the archdeacon, who evidently was a perfect rider in both saddles,³ as the phrase ran then, and as much versed in arms as in theology.

¹ "Al, estrivo se me pega."

² "De blanco me vesti, y con sombrero
De paja, en mi caballo a la gineta
Llevando solamente un compañero
Y cada cual a punto, una escopeta."

("La Argentina," Barco de la Centenera, Canto xx., p. 79.)

³ "Ginete en ambas sillas"—i.e., to ride well on the European and on the Moorish saddle—was a thing on which men valued themselves so much in those days that they sometimes had it chiselled on their tombstones.

CHAPTER XVI

DURING the revolt of Oberá that kept both Garay and Melgarejo occupied, the unlucky Adelantado Zárate, penned up in the island of San Gabriel by the Charruas, short of provisions and without experience of Indian warfare, was in a miserable plight.

Time after time the chief Sapicán paddled with a fleet of canoes in front of the Spanish vessels in the harbour of San Gabriel and challenged them to fight.

Provisions grew so scarce, and the Charruas held the fleet so tightly blockaded, that it was impossible to land (in Uruguay) and search for provender. The one communication left free was up the river, and luckily, at the last moment, when want of food would have forced the Spaniards to surrender or to attempt a desperate action against a much superior enemy, Rui Díaz Melgarejo arrived with a considerable force.

In all the River Plate at that time, no one, except perhaps Garay, was Melgarejo's equal in Indian warfare. For years he had lived out on the frontiers at Guayrá, and knew each Indian wile and ruse of war. At once he pointed out that the way up the river still was open, and that the Indian canoes, though formidable by their number in the narrow passage betwixt the islands and the shores of Uruguay, could not engage the Spanish vessels in the open waters of the great estuary.

Knowing the river as he did by long experience, he advised Zárate at once to issue out from harbour and take up a position at the island of Martin Garcia, just at the junction of the Parana and Uruguay. When Zárate arrived at Martin Garcia he was safe from

attack, but the want of provisions still continued, so Melgarejo, at the hazard of his life, accompanied by but eight soldiers, landed, and having cut his way through the Indians, was able to return with enough provisions to stave off famine for the time.

Still Zárate's situation was almost desperate. He himself was far from being fit to grapple with a crisis that called for all the energy of a Chaves or a Caceres.

Less able far than Pedro de Mendoza, the first founder of Buenos Aires, he neither had his gallantry nor his knowledge of affairs. His one advantage was his health, for want of health had proved the undoing of Don Pedro, the first viceroy of the River Plate.

The Charruas, under their celebrated chief, Sapicán, attacked the Spaniards, cooped up in Martin Garcia, almost every day. Never before in all the conquest of the River Plate had they encountered such ferocious enemies.

It was then occurred the incident of the fight of Domingo Lares and his six brave comrades against an overwhelming force of Indians. Surrounded by a band of the Charruas, the seven young men fought with their swords and bucklers till all but Lares lay stretched out upon the field. Lares, who had but one arm, held out undauntedly, determining to die rather than yield his sword. At his brave attitude the Indians were struck with admiration, and rose superior to themselves. Their chief, after a brief harangue, ordered a general rush, having given orders that the Spaniard's life was to be spared. Then they dashed in and bore him to the ground, carried him to their camp and dressed his wounds, for they held courage the one virtue that constitutes a man. Such episodes, rare in the conquest of the Americas, might have shown that even in the Indians, who were held to have no

reason,¹ the selfsame qualities existed as were found in other races of mankind.

It was reserved for the Spaniards to show the obverse of the shield, not very long after this episode, that should have drawn them towards the Indians in a common bond.

A Spanish soldier, still a youth, was scouting, mounted on his horse, along the banks of the great River Uruguay. In the middle of a wood he came upon two Indian lovers, a renowned chief called Yandaballo, and an Indian girl to whom Barco de la Centenera always refers as "La Bella Liropeya." She, struck perhaps with the youth of the Spaniard, implored her lover not to fight with him, as he was but a boy. The Indian threw his lance upon the ground, and asked the Spaniard, whose name was Caravallo, to dismount.

They sat down in the shade and for a while talked amicably.

An Arcadian scene it must have been. The Indian with his feather crown, and Liropeya, her long hair falling down to her waist and cut square on the forehead, as is the custom still in country places throughout Paraguay; the youthful Spaniard in his buff coat and steel helmet, his horse, tied to a tree, nodding its head in the noonday heat under his high Moorish saddle and heavy metal stirrups, and dozing as it stood, with one ear pointed forward and the other back, as in wild places horses always stand, even when half asleep: a picture that some day should have a place in the Pantheon of the River Plate.

Parrots flew chattering over them as they sat talking in the shade of some old Ñandubay or Arasá, and the sweet scent of the Espinillo de Olor was wafted

¹ "Gente sin razon" was a common phrase amongst the conquistadores; but then, though not always used, it has been persistently acted upon by all conquerors down to the present day. The ordeal by battle seems to be firmly rooted as an ideal in the hearts of all peoples.

on the breeze, as butterflies floated across the little clearing where they sat.

Behind them was the tangled monté of low, gnarled trees all wreathed in creepers, the home of countless birds.

Nothing was wanting but goodwill and human fellowship to make a paradise.

Much did the Indian discourse in broken Spanish, telling the Spanish youth the story of his life, and that La Bella Liropeya was to be his wife when he had proved himself a warrior by vanquishing five chieftains of the enemy.

Caravallo listened with his eye upon the Indian maiden, who appeared marvellously fair. The more he listened, the more he coveted her, and in his heart he pondered treachery. Rising as if to go, he took his lance out of the ground where he had stuck it, and as the Indian stretched out his hand to bid farewell, he pierced him to the heart. He fell without a word, and as he fell the Bella Liropeya fainted with horror at the deed.

When she recovered, she would not listen to the Spaniard's love-making. Then, seeing that she was alone and unprotected, she feigned assent, but stipulated that her lover should be buried, so that wild animals should not mangle him. The Spaniard dug a grave with his sword, and resting, laid his weapon on the ground. The Indian maiden seized it and plunged it in her breast, and with her dying breath exclaimed, "Dig the grave deep enough for both of us."

Then for the first time Caravallo seems to have taken in the full extent of his foul deed.

He thought,¹ like Judas, of taking his own life, but

¹ "Estaba muy suspenso que haria
Y cien veces matarse, alli ha querido."

("La Argentina," Barco de la Centenera, Canto xii., p. 21.)

lacked the false apostle's courage, so that his bowels did not gush out, as by all rights they should have done.

At last Garay found his hands free to come to the assistance of the unlucky Adelantado Zárate.

His advice was to get a footing on the mainland, so Zárate founded a post upon a little river that falls into the Uruguay, and bears his name down to the present day. Hardly was the settlement established, and the women and the sick transferred to it, than it was violently attacked by the Charruas. Never had Garay found himself in so great danger, for the Charruas outnumbered him by five to one.

Both sides fought with desperation, and Garay must have been indeed hard pressed, for he addressed his soldiers in the true spirit of a conquistador, telling them that there was nothing for it but to conquer or to die.

He himself showed the example to his men of a brave captain. Into the thickest of the Indians' ranks he rode, till he was wounded and his horse killed by a spear thrust.

The Indians on their side fought as they had never fought before in all the conquest of the River Plate. The brave Archdeacon Barco de la Centenera seems to have been right in the thickest of the fight, for he says that he saw an Indian¹ seize a horse's neck and cut the reins through with his teeth. He died with the reins in his mouth, killed by one Juan de Osuna, a Spanish soldier.

Victory was bound to be upon the side of the small but well-armed forces of Garay, and once again the Indians, in spite of all their desperate valour, lost the day.

These battles, and the great stand of the Charruas under their chief Sapiacán, combined to shift the

¹ "Por mis ojos vide aqueste dia a este Indio que abraçandose con el caballo, cortó con los dientes la una rienda del caballo, y así murió con la rienda en la boca, a puñaladas que le dio Joan de Osuna" ("La Argentina," Canto xiv., p. 51).

interest of the conquest down the river, and already Zárate seems to have made a permanent settlement at San Salvador. The victory of Garay opened the way at last for Zárate to proceed to Asuncion.

When he arrived there he at once showed his incompetency; but luckily for the colony he died before serious dissensions broke out. Zárate seems to have been unfortunate even in his brief spell of good fortune, for had not Philip II. made him Adelantado he would not have encountered so many troubles that he was quite incompetent to face.

He died like a good Christian and a brave man,¹ receiving the last rites of the Church cheerfully and devoutly, and refusing to take any of the remedies that one Pedernera,² an old man and possibly a quack, pressed on him earnestly. He was not popular amongst the people of Asuncion, who were accustomed to governors of a different stamp; but yet they respected his last wishes and elected his nephew, Diego de Mendieta, whom he had named as his successor in his will, to be their governor.

They could not possibly have hit upon a man less fitted for the post.

His uncle Zárate had left a provision in his will that Mendieta should marry his daughter, Doña Juana Ortiz de Zárate, who at that time lived in Chuquisaca.

Juan de Garay, who was one of Zárate's executors, set off at once to inform the lady of the clause in her father's will.

He found her surrounded by a band of suitors for her hand. The Viceroy of Peru, Don Francisco de

¹ "Murió con mucho animo y con brio."

² "Pedernera, hombre viejo" ("La Argentina," Canto xviii.).

Pedernera seems to have been what the Gauchos used to call a "Curandero." These unlicensed practitioners often effected real cures with simple remedies, but now and then resorted to a sort of white magic that was also at times effectual, when the patient had faith.

Toledo, had destined Doña Juana for one of his own godsons, but the lady did not fall in with his views. She married secretly one Juan Torres de Vera, a lawyer and a famous warrior, for at that time nothing was more usual than to combine the two careers.

The viceroy had him arrested and brought a prisoner to Lima, and his disgrace was nearly fatal also to Garay, who only saved himself by flight, having apparently helped on the marriage of the lovers against the viceroy's will.

In Asuncion, Mendieta soon showed himself in his true colours, and no man's life or woman's honour was safe from his attacks, according to the only chronicler of the events, the Archdeacon Barco de la Centenera, who certainly, as far as the history of the River Plate was concerned, had a fair field and no competitors.

Under the rule of Mendieta, Paraguay passed through one of those periods of tyranny and of oppression to which its position, shut off by a thousand miles of river navigation from the outer world, throughout its history made it an easy prey. Nearly fifty years had passed since the first landing of Mendoza in the River Plate, and yet the mouth and lower reaches of the great estuary were quite deserted by the conquerors, with the exception of the islands of San Gabriel and of Martin Garcia, and possibly some little forts in Uruguay. Upon the west bank of the River Plate and of the Parana nothing existed right up as far as Santa Fé, except the ruins of the fort Gaboto had constructed, before Mendoza had arrived.

Even the town of Santa Fé had only just been founded, as well as Cordoba and Tucuman. The deserted state of the great river, and the agglomeration of the Spanish population far away in Paraguay, naturally gave great scope to such a Governor as Mendieta proved himself to be to tyrannize and to

oppress. Public opinion hardly existed, and communication with the mother country was difficult and slow. The crossing of the Spaniard with the Guarani produced a people submissive to its rulers and its priests to an extraordinary degree. Far different was the race soon to arise after the refoundation of Buenos Aires and the settling of the plains.

A temperate climate, the vast solitudes in which the isolated Spanish families lived, the melancholy of the landscape, as unbroken as the sea, together with the ever-present fear of the fierce Indian tribes, destined to remain unsubdued for centuries, the life so near to nature, long days passed on horseback, for a man afoot upon the plains was like an alligator upon land, produced a race of centaurs, self-contained and taciturn as Indians.

In Buenos Aires from the first they kept up constant communication with the metropolis, and very soon began to show that enterprising spirit and fierce love of liberty that has made their city the greatest of the Spanish-speaking world.

In Asuncion the rule of Mendieta was becoming insupportable, but he had inspired such terror by his wholesale cruelties that it seemed destined to endure, had not a lucky stroke of fortune led to his downfall and his death.

For some reason or another Mendieta undertook a journey to Peru, and happening to touch at the newly-founded town of Santa Fé, quarrelled with his lieutenant, Francisco Sierra, who, knowing the kind of man he had to deal with, fled and took refuge in the church.

Sanctuary did not seem to weigh with Mendieta, as it did usually in the case of nearly all the other conquerors, for he had Sierra dragged from his place of refuge and at once beheaded him.

This time he had gone too far, and both his soldiers

and the inhabitants of Santa Fé rose in rebellion and besieged him in his house, where he held out almost alone, for want of courage could not be laid to his account.

Then, when they threatened to burn down the house above his head, he made a bargain with them, offering to surrender if his life was spared and that he should be sent home to Spain, to be tried by the High Court.

The unsuspecting colonists, not understanding that to the cruel nature of the wolf he added all the cunning of the fox, sent him off homewards in the same vessel on board of which he had sailed down from Paraguay.

Hardly had he got beyond the River Plate than he persuaded the pilot of the ship to touch at San Vicente, hoping, no doubt, to profit by the known jealousy of the Portuguese for all things Spanish and their desire so often manifested to stir up trouble in the neighbouring colony.

All his designs succeeded, almost beyond his utmost expectation. The Governor received him, not as a prisoner going home to be judged for his misrule and wholesale cruelty, but as a man unjustly treated who merited his help. Mendieta must have been a man who on occasion could make himself acceptable, for, on the short acquaintance he had had with him, the Governor of San Vicente offered him his daughter as a wife, and gave him arms and money to regain his governorship. Fortune appeared to smile on him again, but he was one of those destined to bring about their own ruin by their violence. Hardly had the vessel left the isle of San Vicente, on its voyage back to Asuncion, than Mendieta began to tyrannize his men and treat them cruelly. The sailors, far less patient than the submissive colonists of Paraguay, were plotting to make away with him, when suddenly a fierce pampero rose up in the night and forced them

to take shelter in a little creek on the Brazilian coast inhabited by savages.

Mendieta, with seven of his men, had landed, when the crew immediately set sail and left them all marooned. Hardly had the vessel got way upon her and was slowly moving out to sea than a band of Indians burst out of the woods, slaughtered Mendieta and his men, and, lighting a great fire, cooked and devoured their bodies almost in full view of the retreating ship¹ and of its horror-stricken crew.

So perished miserably one of the worst of all the conquerors of the River Plate, a man, as it appears, without a single virtue, but a brute courage that he shared with all of his compeers.

The colony of San Salvador that Zárate had founded had been neglected all through the brief and stormy governorship of Mendieta, and had been all the time so hard pressed by the Charruas that in 1576 the colonists abandoned it, and took refuge in Asuncion. Garay himself appears to have assumed the direction of affairs, probably by virtue of the powers he had received from Zárate. After consultation with the veteran Rui Diaz Melgarejo, who now must have been almost the last of the older colonists, he determined to found a settlement upon the Parana to protect the frontier from the Portuguese.

Rui Diaz Melgarejo himself determined to undertake the enterprise, and having found a site about two leagues distant from the Parana, in what apparently is now the territory of Las Misiones, founded (in 1575) a town that he called Villa Rica del Espiritu Santo. This town did not endure for long, for the

¹ "Cometiendoles de tropel les dieron muerte, y se los comieron casi a la vista de la carabela" ("Ensayo de la Historia Civil del Paraguay, Buenos Aires y Tucuman," Dean Funes, Buenos Aires, 1816, cap. viii., p. 267).

fierce Mamelucos from São Paulo in Brazil destroyed it in one of their incursions, and carried off the Indians who had been gathered in a reduction¹ near the town, and sold them all for slaves.

Melgarejo, always indefatigable in spite of his great age, founded next year another town called Santiago de Jerez. All these foundations showed that Garay was a man of greater practical ability than any of the late Governors had been. He seems to have been the first of the administrators of the River Plate, as distinct from the first explorers such as Gaboto, Nuñez, and Solis, who did not waste his time and his men's lives by long, disastrous expeditions to discover mines. How the small vessels that he had at his command could force their way amongst the myriad islands of the Parana and River Plate, dependent as they were on sails alone, remains a marvel. As time went on a race of river pilots would arise, and time was of no value, but for all that a slow-sailing Spanish caravel must at times almost have despaired of fighting its way up the eight or nine hundred miles of river between the islands of San Gabriel and the town of Asuncion.

Whilst Paraguay under Mendieta had been delivered over to dissensions and to civil wars, and little done to make the frontiers secure against the incursions of the wild Indian tribes, either from the Chaco, just opposite Asuncion itself, or from the forests in the north above Guayrá, the newly-settled provinces of Cordoba and Tucuman that had been conquered from Peru, under the good administration of Geronimo Luis de Calvera, had enjoyed perfect peace, except for an incursion now and then of the wild Indians.

When Calvera's term of office came to its conclusion

¹ A "reduction" was the name the Jesuits in Paraguay gave to the settlements into which they gathered up the Indians.

he was succeeded by one Gonzalo de Abréu, a man of violence and blood. He seems to have conceived an animosity against Calvera on account of his good qualities and of his popularity amongst the colonists, though it does not appear that they had ever met each other.

As soon as Abréu had been received into his government of Tucuman, he marched at once with troops he could rely upon to Cordoba, where Calvera had retired to his estates. When he heard that the new Governor had arrived, Calvera with a few followers went out to welcome him. Instantly, and as it appears without a cause but jealousy of his good name and popularity, Abréu seized him, and after a sham trial had him executed.

The savage treatment of the conquistadores by one another, not only in the River Plate but also in Peru and Mexico, sheds a strange light upon their characters. No doubt their fathers and their grandfathers had but just emerged from the long struggle of eight centuries with the Moors; but that does not entirely give a reason for their ferocity.

The struggle with the Moors had not been conducted with exceptional cruelty until the very end. Naturally, as it drew towards a close, the Spaniards felt themselves the stronger, and a feeling of superiority unknown for centuries grew up amongst them. Such feelings always lead to cruelty towards the race held as inferior. In America, at first, and indeed for many years after the first conquest, public opinion was non-existent, or at the best was very weak. No doubt in certain instances, as in the revolt of the Pizarros in Peru, a limit could be passed, but in the main opinion tolerated bloodthirsty deeds amongst the chiefs, so that the rights of the soldiers and the colonists were not infringed.

This sort of attitude of mind the Spaniards inherited from the Moors, with their inherent spirit of democracy, for amongst Orientals it is usually the rich who become victims of oppression and of cruelty—for who would take the trouble to oppress a man from whom no money could be wrung?

In this particular instance Abréu seems to have gone too far, and during the ensuing year (1578) he tried to divert the people's eyes from his oppressions and his crimes, after the immemorial fashion of all statesmen, with distant expeditions and with wars.

After a disastrous expedition against the Calchaquis, who were established in a territory close to the Andes, from which Abréu only returned alive through his own valour and his desperate energy, he embarked on a most curious enterprise that, although fruitless, yet occupied men's minds for nearly two centuries.

Although in the viceroyalty of the River Plate no one appears to have expected to discover any El Dorado, as was the case in Venezuela and Colombia, yet there were rumours of enchanted cities and of strange, isolated commonwealths, in which men lived their blameless lives as in the age of gold.

Of all these the City of the Cæsars occupied the first place. Countless expeditions went to search for it without success. The first was in the year 1578, set afoot by Gonzalo Abréu, Governor of Tucuman, most probably upon political rather than scientific grounds.

Pedro de Oviedo and Antonio de Coba, two sailors who had set out from Spain in a vessel that belonged to the Bishop of Palencia, were shipwrecked in the year 1576 or 1577 upon the Chilean coast, then unexplored and in the possession of the Araucanian Indians.

They gave a long account of a great city they had seen, inhabited by people nearly white, and who had

their own code of laws. This town was fortified, surrounded by a wall, and the gates closed at night, with a strong guard set over them.

Nothing was better calculated to fire the imagination of the conquistadores, who had within their lifetime seen and heard of such strange things, that nothing seemed out of the bounds of probability. Gonzalo Abréu assembled a strong force and set out full of hope. Had he succeeded, all his cruelties would have been forgotten, just as the cruelties of Pizarro were condoned in Spain, where they were blotted out with gold.

After enduring countless hardships for many months, Abréu returned to Tucuman with his expedition decimated by hunger and disease.

He was the first to sally forth to reach the City of the Cæsars, and though he failed disastrously the legend always grew in strength, fostered by tales brought back by wandering explorers and by reports gleaned from the Indians. The field of human folly and credulity never long lies fallow, and so the City of the Cæsars by degrees got mixed up with Trapalanda, the paradise of the wandering Indians of the Pampa, where, in the Milky Way, they hunted ostriches, whose feathers,¹ floating through the sky, formed the Magellan Clouds.

As late as 1781, the Spanish government ordered the Captain-General of Chile to take measures to assist Captain Don Manuel José de Orejuela with men and arms to undertake the conquest of Los Cesares. An official known as El Fiscal de Chile prepared nine volumes of notes extracted from the national archives to help the adventurous captain in his task. This magistrate, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, pursued

¹ "A Description of Patagonia," Father Thomas Falkner, Hereford, MDCCLXIV., cap. v., p. 115.

his examination of the case "according to the principles of legal criticism. . . . The objections that had been made appeared to him . . . only the cavillation of men accustomed to doubt of the most evident affairs. . . ." The worthy Fiscal¹ thought he had answered all objections, and he not only believed firmly in the existence of Los Cesares, but held that everyone should do so with the existing proofs.

The Fiscal, having proved with legal criticism and passages confirming his opinion drawn from the archives, no doubt duly attested by those who made them, that the City of the Cæsars really existed, and was only waiting to be visited, the expedition set out on its quest.

It was no more successful than the rest, and they returned without finding any city, but still confident that the fault was only in their guide.

What the Fiscal said about it is not recorded, but he had still his principles of legal criticism to console him, in the same way that some of those who have lost their faith in heaven still find their greatest consolation in their belief in hell.

Most of the Jesuit fathers, as Mascardi, Lozano, and Cardiel, who wrote so wisely and so well upon the Indian tribes with whom they passed laborious and self-denying lives, ploughing one of the stoniest of fields known to the Christian moral agriculturist, and noting down with the minutest observation the customs

¹ "Este magistrado procedió en su examen con los principios del criterio legal, que no duda de lo que se apoya en declaraciones juradas, explicitas y terminantes. Las abjecciones que se hacian contra estos asuntos le parecian cavilaciones de hombres acostumbrados a dudar de las cosas mas evidentes. . . . Su conocimiento es completo, no solo creia en los Cesares, sino se esforzaba a que todos los creyesen . . . con semejantes atestaciones . . . parece que ya no se dudase de la existencia de aquellas provincias" ("Coleccion de Documentos," Angelis, Buenos Aires, 1836).

of tribes who have long disappeared, compiling grammars¹ of strange agglutinated tongues, a true love's labour (but not lost), firmly believed in the existence of Los Cesares.

Father Nicolas Mascardi² proved his faith by going on an expedition to discover the enchanted City of the Cæsars, and lost his life on his return at the hands of the Poya Indians.

Father Cardiel, writing to the Governor-General of Buenos Aires in 1746, goes into minute particulars as to the methods to employ to fit out an expedition, and as to the kind of men best fitted to carry it out successfully.

He must have lived a long time on the frontiers, for all he says could not have been said better by an experienced captain of light horse.

After recommending that the force should be composed of three hundred Gauchos, each man with five or six spare horses and a herd of cows for meat (for as he truly says these kind of people eat no bread), he

¹ "Arte, catequismo y vocabulario de los Abipones y Quiroganis," por P. Alonso Barsena.

Father Dobrizhoffer, in his most interesting work, "Historia de Abiponibus," Vienna, 1784, English translation, not signed, London, John Murray, 1822, refers to the language of the Abipones as follows: "It is difficult for a European to accustom his tongue to the strange and distorted words which the savages pronounce so fast and indistinctly, hissing with their tongues, snoring with their nostrils, grinding with their teeth, and gurgling with their throats; so that you seem to hear the sound of ducks quacking in a pond, rather than the voices of men talking" (vol. ii., p. 159).

II. "Arte y Vocabulario de la Lengua Tonocote." Hervas.

III. "Vocabulario de la Lengua Abipona." Briguïel (Autografo).

IV. "Vocabulario domestico de los Indios Linguas." Pedro Cervino (Autografo).

² Father Dobrizhoffer, vol. iii., p. 412. Dobrizhoffer evidently was not a believer in La Ciudad de los Cesares, for he says: "P. Nicolas Mascardi went with a number of Patagonians to seek the fabulous city de Los Cesares . . ."

recommends the Governor should give them powder and balls, for many of the men had only lances, so that when all was furnished the expense would be but small.

Axes and spades and crow-bars every countryman had in his own house, and they should take them to make wells and build corrals and make canoes to ferry over streams.

Lastly, he proposed to preach to them himself, being well known to all of them upon the frontier, putting before them the service that they would do to God and to the king, and, if the expedition was successful, how much profit they would have.

The expedition¹ never seems to have been carried out, so that the sermon, with all its various points of exhortation, manward and Godward, was, as it were, still-born.

The City of the Cæsars had as long a life as had El Dorado, or Manoa, the city of the golden temples and the golden walls, for failure never yet affected any man's belief. Trapalanda is eternal, and deserves to be so if only for the beauty of the name, and there are some who hold the Indians not far wrong when they created for themselves a paradise where grass grows ever green, watered by streams upon whose banks there pasture horses, tireless as the wind.

¹ "Este descubrimiento se podia hacer con 300 paisanos de esta gente estanciera sin gastos reales; llevando cada uno 5 o 6 caballos y otras tantas vacas, pues esta gente no gasta pan ni bizcochos. Caballos y vacas todos tienen, y con solo darles polvora y bala de 6 a 7 libras de cada cosa (pues muchos usan lanza) estaba hecho el gasto. Porque acha, barretas, azadas, palas para hacer pozos a falta de agua, enpalizadas para defensa, etc., todos llevan de sus casas y canoas para pasar rios. Si yo que soy conocido por estas partes . . . les hiciera una exhortacion animandoles a la empresa, poniendoles delante los grandes bienes que de ella seguirian al servicio de Dios, del Rey, y aun el suyo propio" (Estancia de Arcos, Agosto 11, 1746).

This curious letter is signed "Your servant and chaplain, who kisses your excellency's hands" (B. L. M. de V. E., su mas afecto servidor y Capellan). It is contained in "La Coleccion de Documentos," published by Pedro de Angelis. Buenos Aires, 1836.

CHAPTER XVII

FIFTY-FIVE years had now elapsed since Don Pedro de Mendoza had landed in the River Plate and founded Buenos Aires for the first time in such disastrous circumstances. For more than forty years the newly-founded town had been abandoned, and its original possessors, the ferocious Querandis, had prevented all attempts at a resettlement. Although the natural capital was still a wilderness, the conquest of the whole territory had steadily progressed.

The fact that the chief city of the viceroyalty was situated nearly one thousand miles distant from the seaboard, in Paraguay, had militated to some extent against the progress of the conquest as a whole. In Paraguay, far from the metropolis, in a soft climate and amongst a quite unwarlike people,¹ Europeans soon grew indolent, or if they still retained their energy frittered it away in internecine broils. Asuncion might have become a sort of City of the Cæsars, buried in the woods, cut off from Europe and inhabited by a race of gentle half-castes, forgotten and forgetting and quite unconcerned with further conquests, had not the neighbourhood of the powerful viceroyalty of Peru and the increasing pressure of the Portuguese, who even then had begun their incursions from São Paulo, kept the few older captains who survived always on the alert.

Rich and adventurous and in continual communication with the mother country by the way of Panama, the Peruvians had already penetrated to what are now

¹ The Guaranis.

the upper provinces of the Argentine Republic. They had already settled and founded the towns of Salta, Rioja, Catamarca, Jujuy, and Cordoba; Tucuman had only just been saved to the viceroyalty of the River Plate by the foresight and speedy action of Garay. The infrequent expeditions to the Gran Chaco, with the exception of the first of all made by Alvar Nuñez in his brief governorship, had all come from Peru. No single settlement had been made there, or been attempted to be made. That was reserved to be the honour of the Jesuits, who, till their expulsion, strove to convert the savage tribes and to instruct them in some degree in European arts. No one can read the works of Dobrizhoffer, Charlevoix, Lozano, or Del Techo without amazement at the self-denial and the simple faith of the few forlorn missionaries scattered amongst the Lules, Lenguas, Tobas, Mocobios, and the Guaycurus. No stonier field could well be imagined than that in which they strove. No fiercer or more indomitable tribes existed in the Americas.

Their natural ferocity and their nomadic disposition had been augmented by their possession of the horse.

From whence exactly they first procured their horses none of the chroniclers have left any data. Whether they stole them from the settlers in Paraguay, or got them from the Pampa Indians, in whose territories enormous herds already wandered, is quite unknown to us. Charlevoix depicts¹ them as skilled

¹ "Ils sont habiles et hardis Cavaliers et les Espagnols ne sont pas a se repentir d'avoir peuplé de chevaux toutes ces parties du Continent. Ces Indiens les arretent a la course, et sautent indifferement par les cotés and par la croupe, sans autre avantage, que de s'appuyer sur leurs javelots pour s'elancer.

"Ils ne se servent point d'etriers, et avec un simple licou ils mènent leurs chevaux comme ils veulent, et les font voler de manière que l'Espagnol le mieux monté ne sauroit les suivre" ("Histoire du Paraguay," Charlevoix, Paris, MDCCLII., p. 158).

and able horsemen, mounting after the fashion of the Greeks by leaning on their spears.

He says they use no stirrups, and with a simple halter manage their horses as they like, in such a way that the best-mounted Spaniard cannot follow them.

The possession of the horse, whilst at the same time it placed the Chaco Indians more on an equality with the Spaniards, undoubtedly made them more nomadic, and by so doing rendered them more savage and more formidable.

Nothing was known of them in the first colonial years, except in border warfare, for the Jesuits did not extend their missions to the Chaco till many years after the refoundation of Buenos Aires by Garay.

Thus, in the latter end of the sixteenth century¹ the viceroyalty of the River Plate had on its north-western boundary a wild, unconquered territory, and a perpetual menace to the colonists.

On the southern border, the Pampa Indian tribes were the sole owners of the southern Pampa, and amongst them a similar condition of things existed as amongst the tribes of the Gran Chaco to the north.

They, too, had caught and learned to ride the horses that already roamed the vast southern plains, descended from the five horses and the seven mares left by Mendoza when he abandoned Buenos Aires and returned to Spain.

Nothing, apparently, had been done to open up

¹ The efforts of the Jesuits having proved fruitless, the wild tribes continued down to about thirty years ago much in the same condition in which Alvar Nuñez saw them in his first expedition to the Chaco.

It was reserved for a Church of England Mission to win their confidence and reduce them to some kind of civilization, as is set forth in that remarkable book, "An Unknown People in an Unknown Land" (Barbault Grubb).

Well did this author merit the title of "El Pacificador del Chaco," accorded to him by the Paraguayan government.

any relations with the Pampa Indians, and they were probably as little known as in the beginning of the world. Upon the western side of the Andes all was different, for there the Araucanian Indians had a sort of polity, and, though of the same stock as the Pampa Indians, had advanced much further towards a settled state.

In Chile, therefore, although a constant war was carried on between the Spanish settlers and the Araucanians, yet both sides knew each other, and as the Araucanians were not nomads and had chiefs who lived in well-built villages, there was a possibility of a real conquest;¹ and the Spaniards were not opposed to an enemy impossible to bring to bay, as on the eastern plains.

Thus none of the conquests that the Spaniards undertook in South America presented the same kind of difficulties as those they had to face during the long-drawn-out period of the conquest of the River Plate.

The want of a good harbour in the great estuary, the lack of foresight in leaving Buenos Aires so long abandoned, and the fact that the impossibility of finding a subsistence on the Pampas had forced them to establish their first settlements in Paraguay, together with the enormous territory they had to occupy with such a meagre population, had all contributed to drag out the conquest to an inordinate extent.

The moment had arrived² when all the wiser heads in Asuncion saw that the refounding of the abandoned Buenos Aires was imperative.

Already Paraguay had become isolated from the whole world, and the new generation, largely born of Indian mothers, though loyal³ to the mother country, could not have had much real interest in her affairs.

¹ The complete conquest of the Araucanians was not achieved till almost the middle of the nineteenth century.

² 1580.

³ "Leales con Su Magestad" ("La Argentina," Rui Diaz de Guzman, p. 57).

The hour brought forth the man.

No one in the whole colony was so much esteemed for valour, prudence, and for probity, as Don Juan Garay.

His career had been adventurous in the extreme. Foremost in every battle, his good luck had become proverbial, and his integrity was beyond all doubt.

He was not one, after the fashion of Caceres and Chaves, to run off on wild adventures, and he seems not to have been touched at all by the prevailing mania of the times that forced so many of the conquerors of the River Plate to risk their reputations in wild expeditions to search for mines upon the frontiers of Peru.

The Adelantado Zárate had nominated Garay his lieutenant-general, and as he himself was neither popular nor energetic, his lieutenant was easily the first man in the colony. The only captain comparable to him in energy was Melgarejo, now an old man, and living far from Asuncion in his own government of Guayrá.

Whether the idea of the refoundation of Buenos Aires originally came from the Adelantado Zárate or from Garay himself there is no certain proof.

At all events, Garay obtained leave from his chief to start upon his memorable enterprise, and so in some slight measure Zárate¹ can claim some credit for the momentous step.

Alone in the pages of the Archdeacon Barco de la Centenera has a contemporary account of the expedition been preserved, and that is meagre in the extreme.

¹ "Poblar á Buenos Aires fué acordado" ("La Argentina," Barco de la Centenera, Canto xxi.).

This summary reference is all that Barco de la Centenera accords to any deliberation on the matter.

But if it was "acordado" (granted), evidently Garay and Zárate were acting in concert.

Garay set out from Asuncion with a large expedition.¹

As was customary in those times, when ships were small and inconvenient, he sent his horses by land as far as Santa Fé. There he disembarked and passed some time to rest and to refresh his men.

Then he set out again towards his goal. The fleet dropped down the river, sailing easily with the current, and the cavalry again marched by land. Their march was most adventurous, for all the country was in the possession of the unconquered Indian tribes, who probably were mounted, for Sarmiento, who was despatched from Callao by the Spanish government fifty years after the abandonment of Buenos Aires by Mendoza to search for news of Drake, already found the Indians about Santa Cruz² experienced horsemen.

Their journey must indeed have been most arduous,

¹ "De la Assumpcion Garay huvo salido
De todos adherentes aprestado
Con el muchos soldados han venido."

("La Argentina," p. 80.)

This hardly agrees with Garay's own account, quoted by Angelis, Tomo III., p. iii.: "Discurso preliminar de la Fundacion de Buenos Aires."

After reciting his titles of Teniente Capitan-General and Justicia Mayor held from Philip II. by virtue of the capitulations entered into between that monarch and the Adelantado Don Juan Ortiz de Zárate (que haya gloria), he says, ". . . yo levanté estandarte real en la ciudad de la Asumpcion, y mandé publicar la poblacion de este Puerto de Santa Maria de Buenos Aires, tan necesaria y conveniente para el bien de toda esa gobernacion y de Tucuman, y para que se entienda y predique nuestra Santa Fé Catolica entre los Indios naturales que hay en estas provincias, y así con celo de servir a Dios Nuestro Señor se asentaron en la ciudad de la Asumpcion sesenta soldados y se metieron debajo del estandarte real. . . ."

² "Viage al Estrecho de Magellanes
Por el Capitan
Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa
En los Años 1579-1580."

("En la Imprenta Real de la Gazeta." Madrid, Año de 1768.)

for Barco de la Centenera, who in general makes light of hardships and of dangers, says especially that the expedition was composed of men who neither cared for heat nor cold, and that in spite of the country and the multitude¹ (of Indians), both fleet and cavalry safely reached their appointed goal.

They arrived at night-time, disembarked, and set up cotton tents that they had brought with them from Paraguay.

During the night the Indians attacked in force, and set fire to the tents with arrows that they shot burning from their bows.

At daybreak a host of Indians, led by their war chief Taboba² mounted on his horse, rushed on the Spanish camp. It must have come as a surprise to the Spaniards to be attacked by mounted Indians at a place where, in the memory of some few of the older soldiers, there was no more chance of encountering a horse than of an elephant. In the fifty years that had gone past since first the Spaniards landed, the Indians seem to have learned much from them as well as horsemanship.

Seeing they made no impression on the Spanish ranks, they retired in perfect order at a trumpet call.

This seems to have been their only effort to protect their country, for from that time the Spaniards were not attacked again during the time they built the town.

Garay at once dug trenches at El Riachuelo, a league higher up the river than where Mendoza made his first unlucky settlement.

¹ "De gente, que no teme sol ni frio
A pesar de la tierra y su gentio."

("La Argentina," p. 80.)

² "Taboba el valiente y animoso
A caballo salió muy de repente."

("La Argentina," Canto xxi.)

On June 11th, 1580, he unfurled the standard of Castille, and in the presence of his followers solemnly refounded the long-deserted town under the name of La Santisima Trinidad de Buenos Aires.

Don Feliz de Azara saw in the archives of Madrid a document that confirms the date, signed by Mateo Sanchez, "notary public and to the town council of this city of La Santisima Trinidad a Buenos Aires¹ . . . that was peopled and founded in the year 1580, on the eleventh day of June of the said year."

Garay's first care was to build a fort, not far off from the shore, that is supposed to have stood at a corner of the Plaza de la Victoria.²

Thus Buenos Aires grew, like Rome, from small beginnings, till it has become the greatest Spanish-speaking city in the world.

Then all the people at a meeting that must have been a curious sight in that rough camp, with the scorched cotton tents, the men-at-arms, sunburned and lean, all armed, the vessels anchored in the stream, with their high poops and forecastles, the lions and the castles of Castille and of Leon floating out from their jackstaves, and the horses feeding on the prairie under guard—these war-worn citizens proceeded peacefully³ to elect magistrates.

Garay himself nominated Rodrigo Ortiz, a near

¹ "Yo Mateo Sanchez, escribano publico y de cabildo de esta ciudad de la Santisima Trinidad de Buenos Aires . . . que se pobló y fundó el año de 1580 años y 11 dias del mes de Junio de dicho año " ("Apuntamientos para la historia natural de los cuadrupedos del Paraguay y Rio de la Plata." Madrid, 1802, Tomo II., p. 218).

² A house, said to have been his, stood near the corner of the square till less than fifty years ago. Then modern vandalism swept it away, as so many monuments have been swept away in order to make probably useless improvements in every city of the world.

³ "Y la gente en Cabildo congregada
Alcaldes Ordinarios eligieron."

("La Argentina," p. 81.)

relation of the Adelantado Zárate, as first Alcalde of the town.

He then proceeded to divide the land¹ amongst his followers at the following places: El Valle de Santana, La Isla del Gato, Rio de la Trinidad, and the Rio del Espiritu Santo. This division of the lands Garay himself affirms he made, signing it at Espiritu Santo² on October 24th, 1580.

The lands were measured first according to their bearings with a compass,³ the property of Captain Francisco Fernandez, known as Pie de Palo,⁴ the pilot—that is, the navigating officer of the fleet. The measurers swore they would measure faithfully, the Alcalde taking their oaths, that they signed with a cross, made with their right hands.

He left between each plot of ground a pathway⁵ running down to the river and the watering-places. Thus was the city founded and the lands divided in the year 1580, as quiet and as prosaic a foundation of a great city as the world has known. The town that Garay founded so unostentatiously had none of the natural beauties either of Mexico or Bogotá. Upon its site no Indian capital had ever flourished. It had no traditions of past glories, no monuments, no stirring memories to evoke.

It had no Indian population that remained permanently settled in the town, as was the case in nearly every other Spanish capital throughout America.

From the very first it was a Spanish city, laid out in squares, with streets radiating from the central plaza and running out until they lost themselves in the great

¹ Leaving, of course, no share for the Querandis, the natural owners.

² "Fecha en esta tierra firme del Espiritu Santo . . . a 24 de Octubre de 1580" (Juan de Garay).

³ Aguja de marear.

⁴ Timber leg.

⁵ "Un camino que vaya corriendo desde el camino principal hasta los rios y aguadas."

plain behind the town. Its great advantage and chief glory was its situation on the bank of the great river, a position that it shared only with Monte Video and with Guayaquil.

For fifty years the name of Buenos Aires seems to have been a household word amongst the colonists.

It could not have been forgotten at the Spanish court, and yet for all that period it had been left abandoned, although on the arrival of every new Governor from Spain he must have seen the want of a good harbour for his fleet.

There was no gold or silver in the land, but nature had already produced without an effort from the colonists a source of riches that has remained one of the chief resources of the country down to the present day. Hardly was the city founded and the fort erected to defend it than Garay, who seemed to have had the true Biscayan sense of commerce, loaded a ship¹ with hides and sugar and sent it off to Spain. The sugar probably came from Tucuman or Paraguay, the hides from the great herds of cattle that had descended from those Don Pedro de Mendoza had abandoned only fifty years before.

Aboard the ship he sent a letter to the King of Spain detailing all that he had done.

This letter probably was read and pigeon-holed in some dark corner of the archives of the Indies, for it contained no word of mines, or even spoke of gold.

The vessel safely arrived in Spain, escaping all the dangers of the voyage, calms, hurricanes, the barratry of mariners, and even English pirates,² by the way. Had they but known in Spain the value of the cargo,

¹ "La Nave se partió muy presurosa.
De cueros y de açúcar bien cargada."

("La Argentina," Barco de la Centenera, p. 80.)

² "No va de Ingles corsario temerosa."

or had even Garay himself known the fertility of the rich, black soil behind the town, the colony would not have fallen into neglect.

That it became almost forgotten as an asset at the Spanish court by the year 1601 is clearly shown by what Barco de la Centenera writes at Lisbon at that date, in the dedication¹ of his book.

Little enough is known of what went on in the new city for the next two years, though probably a few settlements were made along the river bank, and possibly many of the citizens took to hunting the wild cattle for their hides. The Querandis do not seem to have abandoned the outskirts of the town, perhaps by reason of the proximity of the wild Pampa tribes, who came of an entirely different stock.²

In 1582 Garay shared out the Indians in "Repartimiento" to the various settlers. With the exception of one called Incul, none of the chiefs in the lists made of the Indians to be granted to the colonists has anything that looks the least³ like Araucanian in his name. It may be, of course, that the lists drawn up in Buenos Aires by Garay in 1582 refer to the Indians of the whole viceroyalty, and not exclusively to the small tribe of Querandis.

If nothing of particular interest occurred in Buenos Aires, much was taking place that undeniably was of importance to the new settlement.

¹ "*Al Marques de Castel Rodrigo*."

"Aquellas amplisimas provincias del Rio de la Plata, estaban casi puestas en olvido, y su memoria, sin razon obscurecida, procuré poner en escrito algo de lo que supe, entendi y vi en ellas en 24 años que en aquel orbe peregriné." Lisbon, 1601.

² Pedro de Angelis, "*Coleccion de Documentos*," etc. Buenos Aires, 1836. He thinks that the Querandis had no mixture of Araucanian blood, whereas the Pampa Indians all spoke the Araucanian language, or dialects of it.

³ Pacosperá, Yahumberá, Quetati, Tumatumá, etc., sound like Guarani names.

For the first time, the Magellan Straits seem to have been navigated from west to east, and so the voyage of Sarmiento, who sailed from Lima at this time and came out into the Atlantic, was most memorable,¹ as it established a direct way between Peru and Chile and the River Plate.

The opening up of easier communications between so rich a country as Peru and the new colony of Buenos Aires was of the first importance in its development.

During the next two years, in spite of the disastrous rising of the Mestizos,² in Tucuman, the upper provinces were steadily becoming populated, chiefly from Peru. In 1584 Garay embarked upon an expedition up the river towards Paraguay, where he was anxiously expected, as under Mendieta things had gone from bad to worse. He set out from the newly-founded city that he was destined not to see again, in high good spirits, for up to that time all had prospered with him.

In all men's estimation he held the first place in the colony both as a soldier and an administrator.

From all his enterprises he had emerged successfully. His life's ambition was fulfilled. As the Archdeacon of Buenos Aires says when he relates the episode, he was "satisfied with his fortune,"³ but he adds with the love of a mediæval Spaniard for an adage, the moment that anyone is raised to glory, "his very house flies up with him to the roof."

Garay seems to have set out on his journey thinking

¹ It was in this voyage that Sarmiento found five shipwrecked Englishmen living amongst the Indians on a little island off La Cananea, in Brazil.

One of these Englishmen was "Mancebo de Treinta años muy habil, gran matematico."

² Half-breeds.

³ "De su ventura estaba satisfecho" ("La Argentina," Canto xxiii., p. 91).

himself as safe¹ as if he had been in Madrid. Having arrived at some place on the shores of what is now the State of Entre Rios, he and his crew, as was the custom in those days of small, uncomfortable ships, all went ashore to sleep. The place at which he disembarked was in the territory of the Minuanes, a tribe that from the first coming of the Spaniards had been hostile to them. In spite of this, and all the years of his experience of Indian warfare, Garay neglected to post sentinels around his camp. At daybreak the Indians, led by their war chief Manua, fell on the sleeping Spaniards. Garay himself was the first to fall, pierced with a hundred wounds. With him fell forty picked soldiers who had accompanied him from Buenos Aires. Only a few of his companions saved themselves by swimming to the ship. Thus in an Indian ambushcade perished Don Juan Garay, founder of Buenos Aires, by his own imprudence² and neglect of the precautions that his long life of Indian warfare must have rendered second nature to him. An archetype of the conquistadores, he died as he had lived, with sword in hand, and face towards the foe.

No doubt it was the death he would have chosen for himself. Less brilliant than were Caceres and Chaves, not so subtle in his policy as was Domingo de Irala, and on a different plane of education and of outlook to Alvar Nuñez, Garay falls into a class alone. Not a rude, violent soldier such as Melgarejo, nor yet a cultured Spanish gentleman as was Riquelme, the father of the historian Rui Diaz de Guzman, Garay had qualities that none of them possessed.

¹ "El Capitan el sueño permetia
Como en Madrid, seguro en demasia."

² Barco says, "Garay fué de prudencia siempre falto," but it is hard to believe, considering the life he had led for so many years, and the high estimation in which he was held as a leader.

No charge of cruelty either to the Indians, his own soldiers, or even to his competitors for power has ever been advanced against him. His shrewd Biscayan common sense kept his mind always fixed upon the great achievement of his life, the refounding and re-settlement of the great port that Pedro de Mendoza had abandoned, driven out by famine and disease.

The traditions of his own home in Biscay were all of prowess on the sea. He must have often seen in youth the fleets of whalers sailing from Bilbao, and comprehended that a great country such as was the River Plate could never flourish without a port.

In general the conquistadores came from Estremadura, an inland province, so that the advantages of the refoundation of Buenos Aires perhaps were not so patent to them as to a man born on the borders of the sea.

One thing is certain, that none of them but Alvar Nuñez, who, though also from an inland province, had travelled far and had a mind bound by no prejudices, ever seemed to have given much attention to a problem that was of the first importance to the whole viceroyalty.

Garay, more fortunate than most men in this vale of tears, lived long enough to see his dreams fulfilled and his ambitions amply justified.

Sagacious, valiant, and tenacious of his purpose, the great viceroyalty owes more to him than to any one of the bold captains who gave their lives so freely to conquer and to lay the first foundations of the country on such a basis that the task he left for his successors was but to increase and multiply and to possess the land.

Certainly, as Barco de la Centenera has it, "we know"¹

¹ "Sabemos que en la tierra mucho ha hecho" ("La Argentina," Canto xxiv., p. 95).

that in that he achieved much in the land." No love of gold smirches his memory. It is finely said, that Garay never saw any case of necessity without feeling an obligation¹ to relieve the sufferer.

No man could have a finer epitaph upon his civil virtues than this, by the good Dean of Tucuman.

It was reserved for Barco de la Centenera, his old companion in arms, his chaplain and his friend, with a fine flash of imagination that atones for much of his pedestrian muse, to sum up all his character in two brief lines:²

"Fortuna . . .
Si el Capitan Garay viera tu rueda
Con su lanza bien se la clavaría."

With the death of Juan Garay the heroic period of the conquest of the River Plate was at an end.

All the old conquerors were dead or had returned to Spain.

The Querandis around the capital were either all reduced to slavery or had retreated further off into the plains. The northern provinces were becoming settled from Peru, and Paraguay was gradually falling into the state of somnolence that lasted till the advent of the celebrated Dr. Francia, the man of destiny.

The Chaco and the Pampa Indians were unsubdued, and so remained, almost for three hundred years.

Both of them made continual inroads into Paraguay and past the ever-shifting frontier of the provinces of Buenos Aires and of Santa Fé; but their invasions were but raids and never put the provinces in real danger, or forced their boundaries back. Communications with the mother country were more

¹ "Garay nunca miró necesidad en Cuyo auxilio se creyese desobligado" ("Ensayo de la Historia del Paraguay," etc., Dean Funes, cap. xi., p. 295).

² "La Argentina," Canto xiv., p. 51.

frequent now that the port of Buenos Aires was once more established, and a new generation rapidly sprang up that imperceptibly looked on itself as native of the soil.

Ill luck had dogged the footsteps of nearly all of the first conquistadores, and most of them had perished either in battle or of the hardships they endured. Some, as Nuñez and as Caceres, had been sent back to Spain for trial, and few indeed, except Domingo de Irala, had died naturally. Irala certainly established himself firmly and left a name for honesty and for capacity to rule: but then his theatre was limited to Paraguay, and there is certainly no evidence that he was alive to the great capabilities of the viceroyalty, or its importance to the Crown.

That honour was reserved for Juan Garay, who, though he died a violent death, yet left his work accomplished and his name imperishable.

One circumstance serves to differentiate the history of the conquest of the River Plate from that of all the other conquests that the Spaniards made throughout America. That is the number of the heroic women it produced, and the great influence that they enjoyed.

In Mexico, the mistress and the interpreter of Cortés, the celebrated Indian princess La Malinche, was a great and a sympathetic figure, but in none other of the conquests was the rôle played by women, in the least considerable. There was no lack of heroines in the River Plate. The names of Lucia de Hurtado, La Maldonada, and La Bella Liropeya appear in every history of the country, and are, or should be, household words to every Argentine.

There is, however, one, known by a single letter that she wrote, who showed in what heroic mould nature had cast her, and how the other women of the expedition answered to her call.

Amongst the ladies who accompanied Mendoza's expedition at the first discovery and conquest of Buenos Aires and the River Plate was Doña Isabel de Guevara. Her husband was a gentleman of Seville, Don Pedro de Esquivel by name, who lacked advancement, though from his wife's letter, that breathes sincerity, he seems to have done his duty in the field.

On July 2nd, 1556, writing from Asuncion, she addressed the following letter to the Princess Doña Juana, setting forth the good work done in the discovery and conquest of the River Plate by the women, and the great help they gave to the men, and asking that a reward should be given to her husband for his services:

"VERY HIGH AND POWERFUL PRINCESS,

"To this province of the River Plate with the first Governor of it, Don Pedro de Mendoza, there came certain women, amongst whom fortune so willed it that I should be one, and that the fleet should arrive at the port of Buenos Aires with fifteen hundred men, and that they all should be in want of food.

"So great was the famine that at the end of three months a thousand perished. This famine was so great that not even in Jerusalem it could have been equalled, nor can it be compared to any other. The men became so weak that the poor women had to do all their work; they had to wash their clothes, and care for them when sick, to cook the little food they had; stand sentinel, care for the watch-fires and prepare the crossbows when the Indians attacked, and even fire the petronels; to give the alarm, crying out with all our strength, to drill and put the soldiers in good order, for at that time we women, as we did not require so much food, had not fallen into the same state of weakness as the men. Your Highness will understand that

had it not been for the care and the solicitude that we had for them they would have all died, and if it were not for the honour of the men, there is much more that I could write your Highness truthfully. In the face of such terrible trials, the few that remained alive determined to ascend the river, weak as they were, and although winter was coming on, in two brigantines,¹ and the worn-out women cared for and looked after them and cooked their food, bringing the wood for firing into the vessels on their backs, and cheering them with virile exhortations, beseeching them not to allow themselves to die, for they would soon be in a country where there was food, and carrying them upon their shoulders into the brigantines with as much love as if they had been their own sons, and thus we came to a tribe of Indians who are called Timbues, who have good fishings. Then we bestirred ourselves to find out nice ways of cooking, so that the fish should not disgust them, for they had to eat it without bread² and were all very weak. Then they determined to ascend the Parana in search of food, and in this journey the unlucky women endured so many hardships that God ordained that they should survive miraculously, for the men's lives were in their hands, for all the service of the ship they took so much to heart that each one was affronted if she thought she did less work than all the rest, so they all handled and reefed the sail, steered and hove the lead at the bows, and took the oars from the hands of the soldiers who could row no more; they also baled the vessel, and they put before the soldiers that they should not lose heart,

¹ The brigantine of the conquistadores appears to have been a sort of sailing barge or roughly-built half-decked boat. When the word "brigantine" is used, it is always applied to a vessel built by the conquerors themselves. Such were the "brigantines" that Cortés constructed on the lakes of Mexico.

² "Porque no le diese en rostro el pescado."

for that hardships were the lot of men; certain it is they were not rewarded for their work, nor forced to do it, only love¹ impelled them.

"Thus they arrived at this city of Asuncion, which, though it is now fertile and full of food, was then in wretchedness, so that it became necessary that the women should return to their labours, making plantations with their own hands, digging, weeding, and sowing and gathering in the crops without the help of anyone, until the soldiers recovered from their weakness and commenced to rule the country and to acquire Indians as their servants, and so get the land into the state in which it is.

"I have wished to write and bring all this before your Highness, so that you may comprehend the ingratitude that has been shown me in this country, for at present most of it has been granted either to the older or the new (colonists) without the least remembrance either of me or of my hardships, and they have left me without assigning me a single Indian as my servant. I would much like to have been free to go and put before your Highness all the services that I have done you and all the injuries that they are doing me; but this is not in my hands, for I am married to a gentleman of Seville who is called Pedro de Esquivel, whose services to your Highness have caused mine to be forgotten. Three times I have saved his life with the knife at his throat, as your Highness will know.

"Therefore I beseech that you will order that a perpetual Repartimiento shall be granted me, and as a payment for my services that some employment be given to my husband, according² to his quality, for he on his part merits it.

¹ Caridad.

² "Conforme a la calidad de su persona."

"May our Lord increase your royal life and state for many years.

"From this city of Asuncion and July the second, 1556.

"Your servant, Doña Isabel de Guevara,

"Kisses your royal hands."

Upon the cover is inscribed the following address:

"To the most high and powerful Princess Doña Juana, Governor of the Kingdoms of Spain, at her Council of the Indies."

Such were the wives, and such the mothers, of the conquistadores of the River Plate.

APPENDIX I

Carta de Doña Isabel de Guevara, a La Princesa Gobernadora Doña Juana, esponiendo los trabajos hechos en el descubrimiento y conquista del Rio de la Plata por las mugeres para ayudar a los hombres, y pidiendo repartimiento para su marido.

ASUNCION,
2 de Julio, 1556.

MUY ALTA Y MUY PODEROSA SEÑORA,

A esta provincia del Rio de la Plata con el primer governador della Don Pedro de Mendoza avemos venido ciertas mugeres, entre las quales a querido mi ventura que fuese yo una; y como la armada llegase al puerto de Buenos Aires con mill e quinientos hombres y les faltase el bastimento, fue tamaña la hambre, que a cabo de tres meses murieron los mill; esta hambre fue tamaña que ni de la Xerusalen se le puede ygualar, ni con otra nenguna se puede conparar. Vinieron los hombres en tanta flaqueza que todos los trabajos cargaron de las pobres mugeres; ansi en lavarles las ropas, como en curarles, hazerles de comer lo poco que tuvieron, a limpiarles, hazer sentinela, rondar los fuegos, armar las vallestas, quando algunas vezes los Yndios les venian a dar guerra, hasta cometer a poner fuego en los versos y ha levantar los soldados, dar arma por el campo a voces, sargentando y poniendo en orden los soldados; porque en este tiempo como las mugeres nos sustentamos con poca comida no aviamos caydo en tanta flaqueza como los hombres.

Bien creera V. A. que fue tanta la solicitud que

tuvieron, que sino fuera por ellas todos fueron acabados; y si no fuera por la honra de los hombres, muchas mas cosas escriviera con verdad . . . pasada esta tan peligrosa turbanada determinaron salir el rrio arriba, asi flacos como estaban y en entrada de ynvierno, en dos vergantines, los pocos que quedaron vivos, y las fatigadas mugeres los curaron y los miraron y los guisavan la comida trayendo la leña a cuestras de fuera del navio, y animandolos con palabras varoniles que no se dexasen morir, que presto darian a tierra de comida, metiendolos a cuestras en los vergantines con tanto amor como si fuesen sus propios hijos, y como llegamos a una generacion de Yndios que se llaman Timbues, señores de mucho pescado, de nuevo los serviamos en buscarles diversos modos de guisados, porque no le diese en rostro el pescado, a cabsa que lo comian sin pan y estaban muy flacos. Despues determinaron salir el Parana arriba en demanda de bastimento, en el qual viage pasaron tanto trabajo las desdichadas mugeres, que milagrosamente quiso Dios que biviesen por ver que hen ellas estaba la vida dellos; porque todos los servicios del navio los tomavan hellas tan a pecho que se tenia por afrentada la que menos hazia que otra, sirviendo de marear la vela y gobernar el navio y sondar de proa y tomar el remo al soldado que no podia bogar, y esgotar el navio, y poniendo por delante a los soldados que no desanimasen, que para hombres heran los trabajos, verdad es que a estas cosas hellas no heran apremiadas, ni las hacian de obligacion, ni las obligavan, si solamente la caridad.

Ansi llegaron a esta ciudad de la Asuncion que aunque agora esta muy fertil de bastimentos, entonces estava dellos muy necesitada, que fue necesario que las mugeres bolviesen de nuevo a sus trabajos, haziendo rosas con sus propias manos, rosando y carpiendo y

sembrando y recogiendo el bastimento sin ayuda de nadie, hasta tanto que los soldados guareciesen de sus flaquezas y comenzaron a señorear la tierra y alquerir Yndios y Yndias de su servicio, hasta ponerse en estado en que agora esta la tierra. E querido escrevir y traer a la memoria de V. A., para hazerle saber la yngratitud que comigo se ha usado en esta tierra, porque el presente se repartió por la mayor parte de los que ay en ella, ansi de los antiguos como de los modernos, sin que de mi y de mis trabajos se tuviese nenguna memoria y me dexaron de fuera, sin me dar Yndia ni nengun genero de servicio. Mucho me quisiera hallar libre para me yr a presentar delante de V. A., con los servicios que a Y. M., e hecho y los agravios que agora se me hazen; mas no esta en mi mano, por questoy casada con un caballero de Sevilla, que se llama Pedro d'Esquivel, que por servir a V. A., a sido cabsa que mis trabajos quedasen tan olvidados, y se me renovasen de nuevo, porque tres vezes le saque el enchido de la garganta como V. A. sabra.

A que suplico que mande me sea dado mi repartimiento perpetuo, y en gratificacion de mis servicios mande que sea proveydo mi marido de algun cargo, conforme a la calidad de su persona, pues el de su parte, por sus servicios lo merese.

Nuestro Señor acreciente su Real vida y estado por muy largos años.

Desta ciudad de la Asuncion y de Julio 2, 1556 años.
Serbidora de V. A. que sus Reales manos besa.

DOÑA ISABEL DE GUEVARA.

(Sobre)

A la muy alta y muy poderosa señora la Princesa Doña Juana Governadora de los reynos d'España, etc., en su Consejo de Indias.

APPENDIX II

AFTER the refoundation of the town of Buenos Aires, and as the colonists slowly began to settle on the Pampa, appeared one of the strangest types ever known to the world—a type that now has almost disappeared. Circumstances, the absence of towns, and the extreme individualism of the Spaniards caused them to settle not in groups, clustered round a church or village as in Paraguay, but in isolated families, living often far out of reach of one another, and thus the Gauchos, who for two centuries were practically the sole inhabitants of the plains and played so great a part in the history of their country, were evolved.

There was no tribal system such as existed amongst the Arabs, or even with the Pampa Indians, to bind men to each other by a common interest. Religion, too, was almost absent, for there were no churches on the plains, and priests or bishops made their visitations at the rarest intervals.

Soldiers by instinct and tradition, the first settlers did not take to agriculture, except in countries such as Paraguay or Tucuman, where fertile soils and climates that produced the earth's fruits with a minimum of toil were to be found. Their strong individualism was fostered by the extraordinary numbers both of wild horses and of cattle that roamed the southern plains. The older writers all have left accounts of them, but perhaps the best descriptions are to be found in the pages of Don Felix de Azara,¹ or of Father Falkner.²

¹ "Apuntamientos Para la Historia Natural de los Quadrupedos del Paraguay y Rio de la Plata." Felix de Azara. Madrid, MDCCCII.

² "A Description of Patagonia." Thomas Falkner. Hereford, MDCCLXXIV., pp. 39-40.

"There is," says Falkner, "great plenty of tame horses and a prodigious number of wild ones. The price of a two or three year old colt is half a dollar, of a horse for service two dollars, and of a mare three rials, and sometimes only two. The wild horses have no owners, but wander in great troops about those vast plains, which are terminated to the eastward by the province of Buenos Aires and the ocean, as far as the mouth of the Red River (Rio Colorado); to the eastward by the mountains of Chile and the first Desaguadero; to the north by the mountains of Cordova, Yacanto, and Rioja, and to the south by the woods which are the boundaries of the Tehuelches and Diuhets. They go from place to place *against the current of the winds*; and in an inland expedition which I made in 1744, being in these plains for the space of three weeks, they were in such vast numbers that during a fortnight they continually surrounded me. Sometimes they passed by me, in thick troops on full speed, for two or three hours together; during which time it was with great difficulty that I and the four Indians who accompanied me on this occasion preserved ourselves from being run over and trampled to pieces by them.

"At other times I have passed over this same country and have not seen any of them.

"This great plenty of horses and horned cattle is supposed to be the reason why the Spaniards and the Indians do not cultivate their lands with that care and industry that they require, and that idleness prevails so much among them.

"Anyone can with ease have or train up a troop (tropilla) of horses, and being accoutred with his knife and lazo, or snare of hide rope, he has wherewith to get his livelihood, cows and calves being in great abundance and out of their owner's sight; so that it

is an easy matter to kill them without being discovered; which practice is much followed."

In no other country of the world have horses and horned cattle ever increased in such prodigious quantities. In Central Asia the wild horses appear never to have gone about in troops of over one or at the most two hundred at a time. The want of water and the severe cold of the winter probably kept their numbers down.

In North America and Northern Mexico, though numerous, wild horses never increased to the extent that Falkner mentions in the River Plate. There again a cold winter probably checked such an astonishing increase. Falkner is a writer of the highest standing, and all he says is well authenticated and proved by the testimony of other writers.

Don Felix de Azara was a man of science sent by his government to write about the natural history of the River Plate.

His description of the wild horses is most interesting.

"In 1535," he says, "Don Pedro de Mendoza abandoned five mares and seven horses when his settlement in Buenos Aires failed."

In 1580, at the refoundation by Garay, the settlers found plenty¹ of wild horses.

It appears that the home government forbade the colonists to catch and tame the horses, holding they were the property of the crown.

They protested, and Azara found in the archives at Asuncion the judgment giving the case against the crown, dated 1596.

That, he says, "is the origin of the innumerable wild horses that to-day (1802) exist in the south of

¹ "Bastantes Caballo silvestres y comencaron a domar los que podian coger" ("Apuntamientos Para la Historia Natural," etc., cap. lxx., p. 203)

the River Plate as far as the Rio Negro, and even are to be met with in Patagonia."

At first they were referred to as "Alzados," or "Cimarrones," but the colonists by degrees adopted the Indian word "Baguales." This is in use to-day, and a wild colt is always spoken of as a "Bagual." The etymology is curious and doubtful. Falkner gives the Araucanian word for a horse as "Cahual," evidently a corruption of "Caballo," and it may be that as this word would sound strange to a Spaniard it might by degrees have been corrupted into "Bagual."

The Pampa Indians spoke a dialect of Araucanian.

Azara says that in his time there were also wild horses in the north of the colony, but that they never went north of the most southern of the Jesuit Missions.

His description of the wild horses is minute, very exact, and entirely coincides with Falkner's:

"The wild horses live everywhere in such numerous troops that it is not exaggeration to say that they are often a thousand in number.

"They do a great deal of damage, and give much trouble, for, besides eating up the grass, they charge at full gallop on the herds of tame horses and mares as soon as they see them; and passing amongst them, or near to them, they call to them and caress them with low neighings; they startle them, and without difficulty they (the tame horses) join with them and go off with them.

"Thus it often happens that travellers are charged by the Baguales and they are left on foot, the wild horses taking away not only their mounts, but the spare horses that they always drive in front of them.

"To avoid this, as soon as the wild horses are perceived, knowing they are certain to charge down, it is necessary to halt and ride round the loose horses, and also to ride out in front of them and scare away the Baguales. The way the horses charge is not in line

of battle; but some go in front and the rest in column that is never broken or interrupted; the most it does is to change direction if they (the horses) are frightened.

"Sometimes they circle many times round those who frighten them before they go away; at others they pass only once and do not return; again at others they charge so blindly that they break their necks against the carts, if there are any.

" Luckily these attacks never take place at night. . . ."

All this multitude of wild horses seems to have been the fruit of but two hundred years of natural existence upon lands designed apparently by nature for horses, for the grass on the Pampa never fails, nor do the lakes and rivers ever become dry. The climate on the whole Pampa and the absence of wild beasts favoured the increase of the wild horses and the cattle, and that in a country where before the conquest horses and cattle were unknown.

At the first conquest horses were so scarce that Domingo Martinez de Irala bought, in the year 1551, in Paraguay, "a black horse with the near forefoot white, and some white about its face," from Alonso Parejo for four thousand gold dollars, payable from the first-fruits of the conquest. Nuflo de Chaves became security for the price. Azara found the bill of sale in the archives of Asuncion.

However, even then horses must have increased rapidly, for at Irala's death in 1557 he had already twenty-four in his possession.

Azara goes on to say that in his time the common price for a tame horse in Buenos Aires was two dollars, and in Paraguay double; mares cost two reales each, so that the price of horses had not altered from the time when Father Falkner wrote, some thirty years before.

All that both Falkner and Azara say about the wild horses of their times is accurate and interesting.

Azara points out that the wild horses were almost invariably bay,¹ sometimes approaching to a brown,² and more rarely to a chestnut.³ He adds that if by accident a piebald, cream colour or grey, is seen amongst them, he is not a true wild horse, but a tame animal that has escaped.

It is to be observed that the horses to which Azara gives the name of "Baguales" were not horses that had escaped from the settlers on the plains, but the descendants of the five mares and seven horses which Don Pedro de Mendoza had turned loose.

These, in the two hundred years that had elapsed, had all turned feral, and reverted to one colour after the fashion of other wild animals.

It may therefore be that the original colour of the feral horse of Asia was either bay or brown.

Azara says especially that the wild horses to be found in his time a little south of the Jesuit Missions were of every colour, and not descended from the old Baguales.

In Mexico and Texas the wild horses were remarkable for being of many different colours, so it is probable they had not been so long feral or semi-feral as the wild horses of the River Plate.

The Baguales have long disappeared, though up to thirty years ago a few were said to linger in remote districts of Patagonia.

Well within the memory of men now living troops of wild horses were to be met with in various districts of the River Plate; but they were all of different colours, with many piebalds and skewbalds running in the herd. Hence they were descended from horses that had escaped, and were not feral, though they were wild as hawks.

Much of the horse lore that Azara has preserved was current equally amongst the Gauchos forty years ago.

¹ Castaño.

² Zaino.

³ Alazan.

Thus all held that a white horse or a nutmeg grey¹ was the best swimmer, just as Azara says they did in the times when he wrote.

A piebald horse was always reckoned the most difficult to tame, especially if it had white eyes, also a colt that kept its ears stiff when they were pulled was sure to be a buckjumper.

He notes the "Crespos"—that is, the horses all over little curls like Astrakhan, with woolly tails and manes—that used to be found occasionally in nearly all "estancias" in the River Plate.

How they originated he does not know, nor has he any theory; but only says that though a "crespo" horse and mare produce with certainty a "crespo" foal, they are born occasionally from animals that have an ordinary coat. Azara also notes that the wild cattle always reverted to a dark brown colour, so that most probably, in their case as in that of the wild horses, their original progenitors, lost in the midst of ages, also were of that hue.

The wild cattle were in such abundance in the time of Azara and of Falkner that travellers on the Pampa often used to kill them in order to have something to which they could fasten up their horses at night upon the treeless plains.

All these wild horses and wild cattle existed at the same time with an enormous quantity of semi-domesticated animals, so that life on the Pampa for the first two centuries after the conquest was easy, and the settlers naturally were not disposed to cultivate the land.

Most of the colonists no doubt married Indian women in the first instance, and thus the well-known type of the Gauchos gradually was formed.

Tall, active and sinewy, living in isolated huts, in

¹ Sabino.

single families, they grew up in perpetual danger of forays by the Indians, and yet did singularly little to make their dwellings fit to stand attacks. Out on the wildest frontiers all they ever did was but to dig a shallow ditch around the house. Slight as the protection was, it generally sufficed against the Indians, who never dismounted and whose horses could not jump. Far from their fellows, the Gauchos usually passed a solitary existence, growing up only inferior to the Indians themselves in all the lore of the frontiers.

Their lives were passed on horseback. On foot they waddled in their gait like alligators ashore, and many of them must have lived their lives and never walked a mile. Their food was meat, often eaten without salt. Their drink was maté, and their luxuries tobacco and white Brazilian rum (*caña*), when they could get them on their rare visits to a town or the camp store (*Pulperia*).

Few of them could read or write, and yet their address and carriage would have put to shame many of those born with far greater opportunities in towns. Their speech was slow, their voices usually low-pitched, a circumstance they owed most likely to their Indian blood and to their solitary lives.

All were most hospitable, and gave the traveller all that they had to give, maté and meat, a welcome, and a fresh horse if the guest's horse was tired.

In all of them there was a vein of poetry, both in their ordinary speech and the rude rhymes they improvised to the guitar.

They all loved music, and all were gamblers, willing to stake their shirt upon a card.

Quick to take offence, as a general rule they were not vindictive, and wilful murder was a rare crime amongst them, although they often fought and killed each other in fair fight.

Of all the races of mankind, they seemed to have the least affection to a particular place, although not nomads, as the Arabs or the Tartars of the East. There were those amongst them, as Azara writes and I myself remember, who wandered to and fro, "showing no affection¹ to places or to persons, or to anything in all their lives."

The shifting nature of the frontier may have induced this attitude of mind. Those who thus wandered did not migrate as Arabs do, when pasture fails, with the whole tribe, but wandered all alone, of course on horseback, and generally with a small troop of horses that they drove in front of them, working a day or two or perhaps a week or two, when the fit took them; but always wandering, as if pushed on by fate.

Their wanderings are over, for who can wander in a country of barbed wire? The Gaucho has joined the herds of wild brown cattle and the Baguales, it may be in some Trapalanda or another where they still pass their lives more or less as they did when on the Pampa, for well I know no Gaucho would give a bad "Boliviano" for a heaven where he was forced to go afoot.

¹ "En no conocer apego a sitios, personas ni otra cosa alguna en toda la vida" ("Apuntamientos Para la Historia Natural," etc., Azara, cap. lxi., p. 280).

APPENDIX III

PADRE LUIS DE MIRANDA accompanied Don Pedro de Mendoza in his expedition to the River Plate as chaplain, and was at the first foundation of Buenos Aires, enduring all the hardships, dangers, and famine of his unlucky commander. He has commemorated what he underwent in the following poem.

Padre Miranda remained in the fort of Corpus Christi as chaplain when Don Pedro de Mendoza sailed for Spain in 1538.

In 1541, when Buenos Aires was abandoned by Domingo de Irala, he went to Paraguay. He was from the first a partisan of the good Governor, Alvar Nuñez Cabeça de Vaca, as, to their credit, were nearly all the Spanish clergy, who stood by Nuñez in his efforts to protect the Indians.

When Nuñez was deposed and sent to Spain by the enraged colonists, who could not tamely submit to seeing their Indian slaves taken away from them, Padre Miranda was also imprisoned and deported in the year 1545.

On his return to Spain he is said to have written a dullish play called "Comedia prodiga."

In it the author, Luis de Miranda, says he had been a soldier,¹ and, disgusted with the world, had then become a priest. Thus it is possible that the author of the curious poem that is not without some merit both for its vigour and its versification, mistook his real path in letters as he had done in arms.

¹ The poem is quoted *in extenso* by Señor Ricardo Rojas in his 'Historia de la Literatura Argentina.' Buenos Aires, 1918.

ROMANCE ELEGIACO

En las partes del Poniente
es el Río de la Plata
conquista la mas ingrata
A su señor:

desleal y sin temor
enemigo de marido
que manceba siempre ha sido
que no alabo.

Cual los principios el cabo
aquesto ha tenido cierto
que seis maridos ha muerto
la señora:

y comenzó la traidora
tan a ciegas y siniestra
que luego mató al maestre
que venia.

Juan de Osorio se decia
el valiente capitan
fueron Ayolas, Luján,
y Medrano,

Salazar por cuyo mano
Tanto mal nos sucedió
Dios haya quien los mandó
tan sin tiento,

tan sin ley ni fundamentos
con tan sobrado temor
con tanta envidia y rencor
y cobardia.

Todo fué de mal en mal
en punto desde aquel día
la gente y el general
y capitanes.

Trabajos, hambres y afanes
nunca nos faltó en la tierra
y así nos hizo la guerra
la cruel.

Frontera de San Gabriel
a do se fizo el asiento;
allí fue el enterramiento
del armada.

Jamás fué cosa pensada
y cuando no nos catamos
de dos mil aún no quedamos
en doscientos.

Por los malos tratamientos
muchos buenos se acabaron,
y otros los indios mataron
en un punto.

Lo que más que aquesto junto
nos causó ruina tamaña
fué la hambre mas extraña
que se vió;

la ración que allí se dió
de farina y de biscocho,
fueron seis onzasu ocho
mal pesadas.

Las viandas mas usadas
eran cardos y raices
y á hallarlos no eran felices
todas veces.

THE CONQUEST OF

el estiercol y las heces,
que algunos no digerian,
muchos tristes los comian,
que era espanto;

Allegó la cosa á tanto
que, como en Jerusalem
la carne del hombre tambien
la comieron.

Las cosas que alli se vieron
no se han visto en escritura
comer la propria asadura
de su hermano.

Oh! juicio soberano
que notó nuestra avaricia
y vió la recta justicia
que alli obraste!

A todos nos derribaste
la soberbia, por tal modo
que era nuestra casa y lodo
todo uno.

Pocos fueron ó ninguno
que no se viese citado
sentenciado y emplazado
de la muerte:

más tullido el que más fuerte
el más sabio, el más perdido
el más valiente, caido
y hambriento.

Almas puestas en tormento
era vernos, cierto, a todos
de sin maneras y modos
ya penando;

unos contino llorando,
por las calles derribados;
otros lamentando echados
tras los fuegos;

del humo y cenizas ciegos,
y flacos, descoloridos;
otros desfallecidos,
tartamudos.

Otros del todo ya mudos,
que el huergo echar no podian
Ansi los tristes morian
rabiando.

Losque quedaban, gritando
decian: Nuestro general
ha causado aqueste mal,
que no ha sabido

governarse, y ha venido
aquesta necesidad.
Causa fué sa enfermedad
que si tuviera

más fuerzas y más pudiera
no nos viéramos a puntos
de vernos así trasuntos
á la muerte.

Mudermos tan triste suerte,
dando Dios un buen marido,
sabio, fuerte y atrevido
a la viuda.

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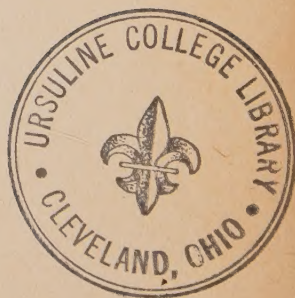
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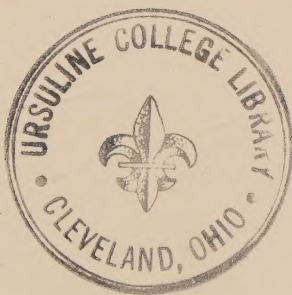
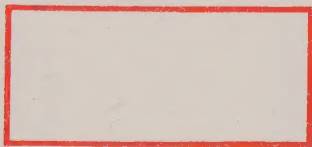
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